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HONOR O'HARA.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
Printed by A. & R. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.

W. H. J.

HONOR O'HARA.

A Novel,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

MISS A. M. PORTER,

AUTHOR OF "THE HUNGARIAN BROTHERS,"
"THE RECLUSE OF NORWAY,"

&c. &c. &c.

"O when shall I regain my orbit of peace and glory!"
ERSKINE'S *Internal Evidence*, &c.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

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SLOCUM

PREFATORY NOTICE.

JAN 1 1 1952

ERE the Reader proceed to the perusal of the following volumes, he is requested to prepare himself for a perceptible difference in their character: a difference observable, perhaps, as much in the strain of their thought, as in the style by which it is expressed.

For the Ray 30972 2nd ed. 1952

Will it be a sufficient apology to say, that rather more than the first volume was written directly after the whole story was planned, three years ago;—that it was laid aside, in consequence of temporary loss of sight, and not resumed until last winter, before the end of which, it was entirely completed?

So long an interval could not fail of producing such changes in the mind and feelings of the Writer, as might be expected to ensue from witnessing, or experiencing, certain changes in the current of her own, or of other dear persons' lives. Thus, she is aware, that the careless tone of her commencement, is altered to a much graver one in many succeeding parts; and that she has suffered one or two characters to slip from her hands with very little colouring, merely because she found her own spirits less calculated to finish them highly, than when they were first sketched. The Writer confesses that her inclination points to what is serious, perhaps saddening, in composition; but friends had so repeatedly urged her to try a lighter style, that she was induced to make the attempt.

Doubtful of her qualification to embody the fashionable manners of the day we are now living in, or to give the

amusing idioms of its peculiar dialect with elegance and fidelity, she has deemed it prudent to throw her story back to a period of which few of her readers are likely to retain such vivid recollections, as would render inaccuracy of dates, or of fleeting modes, a matter of moment. She is not, however, conscious of having erred in the period allotted to any public event; having always resorted to the Annual Register for certain information. Such as it is, this Novel is now submitted to the Public, with the assurance, that if, in attempting to pourtray ordinary life with a livelier pen than she had employed in tracing the humble history of Jeannie Halliday, the Writer shall be found to have failed in interesting or amusing, she will then lay it aside altogether, and resume that of romantic fiction.

ESHER, *August*, 1826.

ERRATA IN VOL. I.

- Page 24. line 6. from bottom, *for is read are.*
49. line 11. from bottom, *for dark read back.*
100. line 3. *for who no knew read who knew no.*
165. line 8. *for covered read formed.*
324. line 7. *for usal read perusal.*

HONOR O'HARA.

CHAPTER I.

AT the upper end of a straggling village, hanging on a steep hill's side, in the North of England, stood an old tumble-down rectory; its walls had once been white-washed; but, like a dirty fair face, only looked more unseemly, from sundry patches of lime staring here and there, through gaps in its crust of weather-stains.

In times past, a waving mixture of ivies and jessamines, had increased the picturesqueness of its gable-ends, and

clustering chimnies ; but these vegetable hangings having a trick of harbouring birds and insects, a certain ruler in the mansion, tore away, with a strong hand, the ivy and jessamine of twenty years' growth. So now, the sole remaining testimonial of former ornament, was but the root of the ivy ; which being of great thickness, and sawed to the ground, served as an occasional standing place for a broken-spouted watering-pot ; which oftener lay covered with dirt, as well as bruises, (a most unsightly spectacle,) just under the parlour window.

Close by this degraded spot, a worm-eaten gate swinging on one hinge, and kept fast by a bit of rope passed through a hole and slung over a nail, opened into a forlorn space, once known by the name of *the garden*, now jointly occupied by pigs and potatoes. The stumps of two or three decayed apple-trees, and the stem of one living wine-sour plum, appeared above the potatoe tops, and served for rubbing-posts to the hogs ; but, saving these wretched memorials of better days,

not a shrub, not a flower remained, to mark

“Where a garden had been.”

To the left of this delectable spot lay a little plashy Close, called the farmyard; where a stable, a pigsty, a dunghill, and heaps of puddly straw were all huddled together into so many floating islands, divided by different channels of wet and mire. A few draggle-tailed fowls, — “a toothless mastiff bitch,” — a lean Alderney cow, — a wall-eyed cart-horse, and thirteen pigs, (when they chose to transfer their fragrant persons from the garden to the sty,) made up the complement of living furniture in the farmyard.

The house had nobler inhabitants. These consisted of Mr. Meredith the incumbent, his wife, his niece, a great gaunt woman of all-work, an Irish nurse, and a lank-haired footboy, not undeserving the very coarsest name for seedlings of his class. Mrs. Meredith (who would venture to deny her precedence?) was in

truth a most formidable personage ; being a lady without either temper, sense, or breeding. For eighteen years it had been her laudable practice to pass through the whole of her house twenty times every day, carrying all before her like a whirlwind ; scaring men, women, children, dogs, and cats, into the first hole they could find shelter in. Doubtless she did it on the principle of purifying the moral atmosphere of the Rectory.

Be that as it may, banging of doors, rattling up and pulling down of windows, clattering of sundry culinary vessels, squalls of luckless household animals, squabbles with itinerant venders or mendicants of useful commodities ; bawling, calling, scolding, slapping — such was the full chorus of domestic discords which had regularly followed Mrs. Meredith's issue from the nuptial couch, every morning during seventeen years, eleven months, and two weeks. Mr. Meredith's honey-moon having had but half a face.

'Through the whole of the ordinary

day, this hurricane blew with the constancy of a trade-wind, during which time Mrs. Meredith went slopping about in a dingy gown and flap-eared cap ; but on the signal of a visitor, or by the evening, the fierce drab changed into a smart woman, all smiles and servility ; seated at the card-table of a *bettermost* neighbour, or presiding over her own tea and toast, surrounded by misses in muslins, matrons in discoloured silks, and spinsters in scour-ed satins. Mrs. Meredith had indeed so becoming a company face to put on with her company gown, that had it not been for eaves-droppers and servants, she would have passed current, (at least amongst new acquaintance,) for a good-humoured, uneducated woman ; but with the last visitor, her last smile duly disappeared, and she was rude Boreas again. So relentless in truth, was the scythe, or flail of her insufferable temper, that it mowed down and scattered all before it, and seemed in a fair way, therefore, of leaving her nothing to scold at last. However, against this direful calamity

she was fortunately provided with a victim for life — that victim was her husband. He, poor gentleman, had a sorrowful trick of sighing at intervals; and a sigh from him was ever the precursor of a storm from her. At that unlucky signal Mrs. Meredith was ready with her fiercest bolt. This was sure to fall in the shape of biting reproaches for his indifference to her value as a chaste wife, and skilful manager — of certain *castings-up* of former obligations from her kindred; and of her own especial grace, in accepting the forsaken swain of the scornful Bell Foster, — of violent invectives against that proud beauty, and broad hints that she had not taken herself off with the captain of dragoons, until it was high time.

The meek-spirited Mr. Meredith could sit quietly under the storm whilst it only buffeted himself; but whenever it beat upon the fair living form, or too probably the ashes of that misguided young creature to whom his heart had once been devoted, he was no longer master of

himself, and a brimming eye and quivering lip ever accompanied the hasty action with which he started from his chair, and quitted the apartment.

Mr. Meredith would have honoured a better fate ; for he had a tender heart, a yielding temper, tolerable talents, and much better principles. He passed amongst his servants and immediate neighbours for a very learned man ; because having no attraction to his parlour, he lived principally in his study. There, he rather dozed over books of research, in melancholy indolence, than buckled to their pith and argument with any vigour of intellect akin to their own. His first affections having been disappointed, and the narrow circle he then moved in, as curate merely of Edenfell, furnishing no other creature fitted to cope with the image of the really charming girl he worshipped two or three years in respectful silence, Mr. Meredith went on from twenty-five till thirty-seven without feeling a new attachment, or dreaming of matrimony.

Unluckily the widow of an unsuccessful ship-owner lived near the parsonage, and she had one black-eyed daughter, with a smart person, and a profusion of smarter pertnesses, to say when she chose to *make the agreeable*, a part she always chose to play before the young rector. The mother's hearty presents were soon as liberally bestowed, nay kindly thrust upon Mr. Meredith, as the daughter's flippant attentions. An uncle of Miss Simpson's, a plain shrewd yeoman, always maintained that marriage was the duty of every man; and her aunt, a withered spinster, dolefully deprecated for her dear Emmy, the sad fate of a poor lone woman like herself.

Mr. Meredith was troubled by the assertions and arguments of the uncle; he was distressed at the aunt's piteous representations; he was besides a good-natured, self-slighting man, and he believed himself greatly bound to this family, inferior as they were. The uncle had always been at hand to assist him in the sore season of tythe-gathering; the maiden

aunt was ever ready to descend from her little aëry at the grocer's, for the charitable purpose of saving their reverend friend the waste of half a yard in a web of cloth; her careful shears set all pilfering or rash-handed maidens at defiance. Mrs. Simpson, the really worthy mother, had always a cold goose pye, or a large plain cake at the service of the rectory, when its larder was taken by surprize; she knew what good Mr. Meredith liked at table, so she could exactly suit his taste, in all her little Christmas and Midsummer offerings. Her daughter put the last touches to these obligations, by looking down on the ground, when her uncle exhorted his Christian teacher to marry; looking up to Heaven, as her aunt bemoaned her singlehood; stitching the wristbands of the shirts so thriftily cut out; and notably honouring her mother's assurance, that all the given dainties were done under Emmy's eye, by ever shewing herself "cumbered with much serving."

Thus beleaguered by a whole family, without a single diversion being made in his favour by any of the surrounding gentry, (for he had shunned them, during his ill-starred affection for Bell Foster,) Mr. Meredith might not, after all, perhaps have fallen to the enemy, had it not been for an unforeseen stroke, which carried him at once. Mrs. Simpson was seized with paralysis: when she recovered the use of speech, aware that she must die, she intreated her good friend's prayers by her bedside. After devoutly joining in those prayers, she took the opportunity of unburthening her mind to him upon every subject. With real simpleness and genuine anxiety for an only child's welfare, she reminded the good bachelor of her many neighbourly offices to him, adding, that she hoped thoughts of these would make him kind to her poor girl, after she was gone. She ventured to add, that if ever he turned his mind to a wife, she hoped he would think of Emmy, who barring a little quickness of temper, would make

the most discreet, managing, pains-taking wife in the country, and would be just the woman for him, who was always letting himself be imposed upon.

Mr. Meredith had not a word to defend himself with : a fearful array of really kind offices were marshalled against him. Completely discomfited, he suffered Mrs. Simpson to triumph. The artless, fervent, "God be praised ! O God bless you, dear sir," of the poor mother, went to Meredith's heart ; and assuring her he would try to make her daughter happy, he squeezed the shaking hand, then grasping his with more familiar kindness, and calling in the sobbing Miss Emmy, repeated the assurance to her, and received her joyful vows of affection and duty in return.

Mrs. Simpson died — Mr. Meredith married. Emulous to deserve the character given her by her mother, the bride began betimes to exercise her talent :

" For her mind
Shaped goodliest rules of discipline,"

such as Mr. Southey tells us, led the heroine of one of his Botany Bay eclogues

“Only to whip two prentices to death.”

Emulous also of praise, she harangued so fluently, and frequently, upon the duties and difficulties of a good manager, that our ignorant divine felt persuaded, a housewife was synonymous with a scold; that nothing valuable in this sublunary sphere was to be got at, except he consented to snatch it out of briars and thorns. Thus, if his wife's tongue kept servants on the alert, awed tradesmen into moderate charges, and so restrained his annual expenditure between the banks of a narrow income, he had no right to complain.

By degrees, however, Mr. Meredith discovered that his wife's oratory was all “noise and fury, signifying nothing:” that his stomach was not indemnified for the stunning of his ears; that he could not balance a good table against a bad companion; nor a clean house against an illiterate wife: that his habitation was

absolutely dirtier, and more disorderly than any man's in the parish ; that he had always the worst trades-people, the worst provisions, and the worst servants possible ; that his bills were large, his comforts small ; and, that while his Better half was dragooning servants and labourers into performing impossibilities, the right, and the useful, and the practicable were neglected.

Thus his garden-gate had remained without other fastening, than the bit of rope mentioned heretofore, merely because Mrs. Meredith haggled every day with the blacksmith, about sixpence in the agreement for putting on a hasp ; and the garden itself was stripped of fruits and flowers, and laid down in potatoes, because it had once been plundered by a set of unlucky boys.

Poor Mr. Meredith saw his little comforts and few pleasures laid waste, one by one ; he loved a garden, though he rarely worked in it ; and he beheld the ruin of his, with a sorrowful eye. But Mr. Meredith, like many married men,

preferred peace to a garden. Once, indeed, he ventured to lament this privation: "Why, my dear," retorted his wife, smartly, "you told us, in your sermon, the other day, that the whole world is a garden — go and walk out into the fields, and take your pleasure now."

This was said with the flippant air of former times; and in those days our unsuspecting divine would have fancied it merely cheerful raillery: unhappily, he was now better informed; but he had passed under the yoke.

Mr. Meredith still gave his wife credit for the best intentions, and the greatest activity in household government — for was she ever at rest? was she not always on her foot, up stairs and down stairs, breaking-in upon his sermon-writing or his reveries, with eternal complaints of servants, and demands for interference with trades-people, with whom, by the way, she never suffered him to interfere? Surely, so much anxiety to make up by savingness the deficiency of her own fortune, was a proof of gratitude and

principle, with which he ought to be pleased? and by this measure her husband judged her. Unobserving man! he never enquired how she came by the variety of bonnets, caps, and gowns, which were proudly paraded before her lesser neighbours at church, and in tea-parties. For this display, Mrs. Meredith, in fact, bartered every thing; here was the aim and end of her management. She contrived to pay the largest milliner's and mantua-maker's bills incurred in the village, without presenting them to her husband. How she did it, I leave such ladies to answer who can hash up a family dinner, and a smart head-gear, out of the same shallow purse at the same instant.

Perhaps this insatiable thirst for possessing fine clothes, may account for some of the dilapidations of Mr. Meredith's habitation. There was in truth only one apartment in the rectory which could boast of neatness and comfort: and that was the little south room in one of the gables, inhabited by Honor O'Hara.

There that young lady had contrived to amass a few books, and a few scarce plants; to cover the faded grey paper with prints framed on it by broad and narrow lines of Indian ink, neatly drawn round them by her own hand; to keep the dimity curtains of her tent-bed, and her single large window always white; and seated at a table spread with work, books, and sketches, escape from the noise and disorder of the rooms below.

Upon this little stronghold Mrs. Meredith for some time made the most desperate assaults; determined to dislodge its youthful inhabitant from what she misnamed "her fine lady's idling place." But Honoria defended herself with so much spirit, resolution, and good humour, that the assailant was always beaten back with loss.

Finding neither sap nor storm of any avail, the virago at length abandoned the attempt.

She did well; for who may hope to conquer a person whose temper is as invincible as their resolution? Miss O'Hara

was never to be plagued or scolded into ill-humour ; and she attached herself so strongly to every thing animate or inanimate, which pleased her at all, that something more powerful than a railing tongue was necessary to make her resign her property in the large casemented window, whence she had habitually looked now for two years, at trees and hills, associated with some pensive or agreeable train of ideas.

The view seen from this favourite window was, in reality, charming of itself : it consisted of a range of romantic hills, backed by the lofty Cheviots ; discovering in their recesses, little glens, where wreaths of smoke and cheerful sounds rising above the tufted trees, told of cottages and contented labour.

At the foot of these hills ran the river Eden, (not the Eden of Cumberland, and perhaps too obscure a stream to be found in any map), but a stream so clear, that every pebble of its bed might be seen through its wave.

Rushing amongst steep banks, fringed

with birch groves, and occasionally broken into falls, it hurried away with a sparkling velocity, which carried the fancy along with it. The height on which the village stood, forming part of its north-eastern bank, the window of Honoria's room commanded great part of the river's course; and in moonlight nights she was accustomed to sit there, enjoying the moonshine, and the sound of bells ringing from some village church at a distance: or, perhaps, listening to the humbler chime of a passing waggon.

In spring, the wind, when it blew off the hills, came laden with the smell of violets; and in summer, with that of heath-blossoms, and the wilding rose.

Honoria never could resist their sweet breathings — she used to carry her book or her work there to the rectory meadows, and seated on the soft green turf, bask in the sunshine. Sometimes little children were her companions, for whom she delighted to make daisy necklaces: oftener, only her uncle's sheep and the dog.

In her idler moods she lay listening to the echoes with which the hills were full; pleased with their gradations; by turn amused or soothed by the different sounds they repeated. Sometimes delivering herself up to that sweet vague of thought, as Madame de Stael would have called it, which for all minds of sensibility ends so surely in sadness.

What woman's heart is there that does not feel, or remember to have felt, such sadness, gathering round their darkening thoughts like mist on the green hill's side? — it is a melancholy without object; yet it overwhelms the soul while it lasts, with a feeling of misery which is deemed, perhaps is, prophetic of future sorrows — it is peculiar to that otherwise blissful season, early youth.

And is there a young heart that does not know by experience an emotion as undefinable, though of a different nature? a vague joy — an eagerness of expectation of we know not what, which quickens the current in our veins, gives animation to every thought, every move-

ment, and seems to rise as spontaneously in our hearts as the spring flowers do from the earth ; it comes on us with the sunshine and the shower, the song of the birds, and the scent of the violet : it often withers in us with the summer rose, or the leaves of autumn.

But who was Honor O'Hara ? The orphan niece of Mr. Meredith : his only sister had married an Irish officer—she died in giving Honoria birth ; the regiment was quartered in Ireland when this sad event took place, and the motherless babe was committed to the kindness of Major O'Hara's aunt. Honoria remained with her, till death (which meanwhile robbed her of her father) removed the good old maiden from earth ; and Honoria was then left with sixteen hundred pounds in the funds, and abundance of Irish pride in her heart. The orphan of his sister naturally fell now to the share of the Reverend Mr. Meredith, his richer brother being married and resident in India ; and as Honoria's little fortune could supply her with pocket money,

clothe herself, and pay the wages and board of the faithful nurse who would not be separated from her, even his kindless wife could not oppose her reception under the roof of her husband. The orphan had now been their inmate two years.

Honorina was just at that April-time of life, and of that April temper which vibrates between smiles and tears; a romantic heart and a gay humour! which was to predominate in the woman, events alone could decide. At seventeen she was a curious mixture of giddiness and sensibility — of proud notions and active humility.

Mrs. Ally O'Hara, by whom the child had been brought up, had lived near a small garrison town on the north coast of Ireland; she was of the best Hibernian blood — and the pension by which she was maintained in dignified superiority over her neighbours, had been earned by the honourable services of Mrs. Ally's father as head of a great public office. Though their family property was all

wasted, its shade haunted the memories of many in Ballygarry; keeping up the respect due to persons who had once owned all the land between Lochcoin and Knocklade. Mrs. Ally O'Hara was therefore *the great lady* of Ballygarry; her grand-niece become at fifteen its *great beauty* — and as Honoria had been made her aunt's companion from infancy, she was soon the principal personage both at home and abroad.

Mrs. Ally had gala days, in which officers of army and navy, besides a few young men indigenous to the soil, flourished conspicuously — and as Mrs. Ally was always to be considered *the great lady*, and as it was worth the pretty Irish girls' while, to purchase their darling idols — agreeable Military — they did not scruple complimenting the aunt upon her condescension, and the niece upon her beauty; — and this they did so often, and so ably, that the young orphan insensibly grew to think as highly of her family consequence as of her sparkling eyes.

Honoria really was charming — and being then at that childish age which privileges men in telling her she is so, the young red and blue coats were not slow in availing themselves of this privilege — and the fond nurse and admiring foster-sister were perpetually repeating what was said of the beautiful Miss Honoria's "flower of a face." Never was poor girl, therefore, in a fairer way of being made a coquette.

From this evil, however, she was preserved, by extravagant notions of her importance as a descendant of kings: to be omnipotent, by means of her beauty, was a secondary sort of triumph. She was, besides, fortified against such an ignoble propensity as flirting, by certain, perhaps fantastic, notions of not merely loving only once during the most prolonged life, but doing it with a delicacy which would make it impossible for her to receive an instant's gratification from any man's attentions, except those of the one beloved. Thus, she came from Ireland with all the ease-bestowing con-

sciousness of beauty, without its frequent concomitant, thirst for conquest. The beautiful Honor O'Hara, as she was styled in Ballygarry, was not however strictly worthy of that title; hers was that kind of face in which the light, the roses, the picturesque varying of countenance and complexion peculiar to unbroken youth, passed admirably for beauty. Her features were softly moulded, and in harmony with each other: that was all their merit. There was, however, a wild brightness in her large black eyes — a glitter on her teeth — and a peachy richness in the colouring of her cheek, which the gipsy darkness of her clear smooth skin seemed intended to heighten in effect. A painter, certainly, would not have called her beautiful: though he might have given his best picture for the privilege of making what is termed *studies of her*.

Honor's figure, too, was charming — habituated in her own careless country, to that happy indifference about dress, which remote from slovenliness, leaves

the figure to its own easy form and motion — while, other ladies were laced within an inch of their lives, unable to bend in any other fashion than that of a jointed doll, she was seen swaying about like a young larch, as the breezes of youth and gaiety impelled. Nature indeed had so exquisitely defined the swell and slenderness of the slight waist, and rounded form, that no covering, however ill-made, could disguise their proportions, — none enhance their loveliness.

Honorina was singularly graceful ; possibly from the very freedom of dress and movement just described. She never thought how she was looking when met in a fresh morning, running over the hills with her hat half blown off her head, all her locks scattered, and her cloak escaping from her laughing struggle to keep it folded round her. She never thought it might look in-elegant when she sat down on some three-legged stool at the foot of a village Goody, — her elbow on her knees, — her hand crushing half

the ringlets of her hair over one side of her glowing face, — and while loosening the knotted handkerchief from her throat, gazing up in the face of her companion, asking some favourite legend of the Cheviots.

She never thought how she was looking at those times ; and yet more than once, her figure, thus accidentally seen by wandering sons of genius, was transferred to the sketch-book of the painter, and the tablets of the poet.

By some craft or mystery, known only to herself, our heroine had the extraordinary power of giving *new expression* to *old clothes*. If she tied a certain large straw hat closely down with a silk handkerchief, she might have gone to a masquerade as a gipsy, — if she allowed the same hat to stand wide, with streamers of ribbon, and a few wild flowers twined round its low crown, she was a shepherdess, — cast the hat off and she was a quaker in her close lawn cap, — put that away, and twist the long ringlets of her forehead with the rest of her

hair, and the finely shaped head, the expressive brow, and the large lifted eye, made her a Sappho.

After this detail of her natural advantages, it is mortifying to give the sorry catalogue of her accomplishments.

Honorina had a genius for drawing: that is, she sketched rapidly and freely the forms of trees, old buildings, cattle, children, in short whatever picturesque group or object caught her attention; but she knew nothing of working them up into lady-like, or workman-like drawings, fit for display. She sang as wood-larks do, sweetly, wildly, — her taste was born of her sensibility, — her tones were rich and downy, and had a certain pathos in them, which deepened the tender sadness of Scottish melodies, and those of her native land. She could also accompany herself in a self-taught way upon the Irish harp.

Beyond this accomplishment Honorina went not. She could dance, it is true, and dance gaily, gracefully, — for she had a fine ear, a light heart, and yet

lighter foot ; but she knew only the few steps necessary to carry an unambitious person safely down that interminable avenue, a country dance, (which, like all other avenues, by the way, is out of fashion,) and might more easily have outran a deer than executed the minuet de la cour, or a French quadrille.

She could, however, work like Arachne, arrange nosegays like Glycerium, make cakes and comfits like Mrs. Glasse, and dress herself at an instant's warning, for a ball, out of a few ribbons. She told ghost stories better than any body : she had always some little comic or touching anecdote to tell after her tour among the cotters, or some amusing sally ready to answer the bantering of a lively companion. She was always in good humour, though not always in good spirits. She gossipped with the aged poor, played with their grandchildren, patted their curs, fondled their kittens, helped them with a little money when they were pinched to pay a doctor's bill ; and neither playing the inquisitor into their con-

cerns nor their consciences ; neither wearying them with lectures, nor pampering them with alms ; bettered the hearts she was warming towards herself.

In winter she helped the hobbling sexton to decorate the church with christmas ; and never before were sprigs of box and branches of holly stuck with so much effect. On Mayday she assisted the children in making their garlands ; dressed their little heads and bosoms with ribbons and flowers ; nay, provided many of the flowers herself. Honoria could not live without a garden ; and finding only a wilderness bearing that name at the rectory, she expended a trifling sum, and employed a very indigent old man, in creating one on her favourite hill's side. Her uncle allowed her to steal a bit of ground from his meadow there, and she in return supplied his study table with the common flowers of every season. Thus she pleased herself, and employed a person deemed past his work.

Honoria lived before Bell and Lancaster were talked of ; and I must confess she

had not the genius to strike out any thing like their systems. Every one must in some degree go along with the stream of their times : so Honoria living at a period in which the education bestowed upon the lower classes was even lower than the remuneration given for their labour, contented herself with doing them every kind office in her power ; inventing little modes of employment for boys and girls, quite big enough for mischief, though not for ordinary hard work ; checking them firmly in every evil propensity discovered by the frequent opportunities this afforded her of developing their faults ; encouraging them to mutual friendliness, activity, humanity, and cleanliness, by her own example, and by substantial tokens of affectionate approval.

Her own habits were incitements to industry : she was rarely seen, even out of doors, doing nothing. If she were not weeding or planting in her garden, she was studying French grammar in the hollow trunk of a broken oak tree overgrown with ivy and wild flowers, which

she had cleared of rubbish and used as an arbour ; or she was leaning on the mossy slope of the hill's brow with her knitting. Such was the activity of her mind, nay, we will add, its sincere desire of being useful, that she never spent half an hour with a sick or infirm cottager without asking for some bit of work to be doing for them meanwhile.

Half Honoria's virtues, at present, however, were simple instincts, yet they had beneficial effects ; some of her failings, even, blundered out real good. The proud delicacy of her own character made her sensitive for the similar feeling she fancied in others ; she therefore frequently created wants for herself, only that she might employ a poor neighbour, and so make him earn the shilling which she would otherwise have given. Insensibly this had fruits : the poorest cotters acquired the habit of thinking alms a disgrace ; and never heard their children begging halfpence for showing the road, or opening a gate, without rebuking them into shame. Honoria was truly loved by

the whole labouring and menial class : her little passing joke, or soothing word, immediately after one of her aunt's domestic whirlwinds, frequently banished from a servant's mind its sudden purpose of staying no longer with such a vixen as Madam Meredith.

One of the greatest gainers at Edenfell by the importation of our lively Irish girl was Honoria's uncle. He had got some one to powder his few dark hairs and bald head ; fold up his cassocks ; keep him in neatly trimmed bands ; undog's-ear the books he was too apt to disfigure by that careless fashion ; mend his pens ; stitch his sermons ; *red-up* his room (as the Scotch call putting things in order) ; and bring a flower for the button-hole of his coat every summer morning. More than this, he had now a person able and willing to throw herself between him and the hottest fire of his lady's wrath. In the season of domestic storm (which generally raged highest upon washing days) Honoria was ever in the way to fly down from her quiet aëry,

at the first angry sounds of her aunt's voice, and by some opportune question attract the lightning to her own head; affording her meek relative opportunity to secure the shelter of his study. After this she was just as cheerfully ready to force his smile by a grave story of Banshees; or to engage him to forget his hapless lot, by talking with him on the most interesting of all subjects, our hopes in a happier world. There were choice moments in which he would tell, and she would listen to, the pathetic tale of the lovely Bell Foster's cruelty, and subsequent shame. At these times, tears were shed between them: for the first love of Mr. Meredith's youth had never been displaced in his solitary heart by any tenderness for the wife he would have loved had she deserved it; and Honoria's prejudices were all in favour of inextinguishable passions. Thus the uncle and niece grew into confidence and affection; and the former soon found, that with one kind being to soothe him under the

inflictions of a kindless one, he might yet enjoy much of rational comfort. It cannot be said that he added greatly to his niece's stock of worldly wisdom.

Edenfell did not boast many gentry amongst its inhabitants: what there were, however, were unanimous in their liking for a young creature, whose constant freshness of spirits, and good-humour, enlivened every body; revived the decaying; and gave an impulse to every plan of innocent diversion.

Honorina had her admirers in this set; (not to mention the young clodhoppers who gazed and worshipped from behind their ploughs as she passed,) a squire or two; the young tutor at His Grace of ——'s; and every luckless officer sent recruiting within two hours' march of the rectory. These she neither shunned nor encouraged, simply disregarding them; for, alas! she fancied herself (as I believe most young ladies do on the threshold of this world's masquerade,) destined for some transcendent somebody, whose por-

trait she found in every poetical hero, and for whose appearance she was daily watching.

In Ireland, poor Honoria had been her great-aunt's reader ; and the stately Mrs. Ally relished no books except antique romances, and the poetry of Elizabeth's day. Novels she disdained. Honoria quickly imbibed a taste in sympathy with the uncorrupted and inexperienced season of girlhood ; and as she learned to like those works best, which draw the most extravagant pictures of human perfection and mortal love ; as she had no judicious friend to correct the mistakes of her imagination ; her head was soon stuffed with all sorts of erroneous notions and wild expectations.

Luckily for Honoria, she had a sharper appetite for reading, than her grand-aunt. The library of her grandfather furnished books of different qualities ; which, though they did not give her an insight into the modes and manners of the acting world, helped her to some knowledge of our mixed nature and

future accountableness ; and gave to her intuitive admiration of excellence, the dignity of principle.

It was, however, still only upon the sublime virtues that Honoria deigned to fix the eyes which had thus early accustomed themselves to look on Spenser's Redcross Knight, and Sydney's Pyrocles, as living men. And as none of her Edenfell neighbours had ever been known to cast themselves from a precipice, or mount a scaffold, or harangue at the stake in honour of freedom or friendship, she overlooked their quiet worth, and put them long aside, as inoffensive poor creatures.

Most of the inhabitants in and about Edenfell were, indeed, nothing better than common useful dowlass : but there were a few exceptions, if Honoria would have allowed herself to think so.

The first of these, Mrs. Preston, lived a short walk from the village : her pretty residence, which had once been a farmhouse, ought to have had such a creature as Honor O'Hara to grace it ; for it was

picturesquely placed amongst green banks and lofty trees; and, being built on the site of an extensive abbey, had many beautiful portions of the ruin remaining near it, to tempt romantic inclination to wander and muse by moonlight.

The front of the house was nearly as completely covered with ivy, as the standing arches of the abbey; so that in all seasons it looked like a bower. It hung on the lower slope of the fell; and as it was looked up to from the river side, the bright space of emerald green it stood on, with its darker boundaries of nut-trees and tall evergreens, were always pleasing to be seen glittering in the sunshine or the moonlight.

The mistress of Hazeldean was the widow of an eminent physician who practised in the county, and took the resolution of marrying her, from witnessing her exemplary and cheering attendance, of two years' continuance, upon a peevish bedridden aunt. The pretty Mary's blooming face, perfect guileless-

ness, and natural propriety of thought and manner, finished the conquest of his pride or prudence ; and at fifty, Dr. Preston married a young woman of three and twenty, the daughter of a substantial yeoman, only a yeoman ! He left her a widow, ten years afterwards, with two children, and an easy income.

Mrs. Preston, at sixty, was as single-hearted, as guileless, as confiding in all her fellow-creatures, as she had been at fifteen. She was also as much inclined to kindness and cheerfulness. She still saw persons and events through the same blessed medium, a contented disposition : the evils of life she still took as matters of course, its agreeable passages as calls for glad thankfulness ; and the recital of a misfortune, the detail of a noble action, a generous sentiment, or one of Honor O'Hara's melancholy ballads, nay, even the repetition of stories familiar to her childhood, would still float her bright brown eyes with tears.

Sweet was the smile ever accompanying that overflow ; for it was the smile

of a heart full of goodness ; unconscious of its own worth ; humbly, happily, referring all human excellence to its rightful bestower, that gracious Being who moulds our hearts at will.

Dear and fondly-remembered friend of my earliest years ! thou whose revered image my hand has unconsciously attempted to trace in this ideal portrait, accept the poor tribute ! Thou hast long been gone down to the dust, with all thy charms of countenance and voice : thy virtues, thy blessedness, thy usefulness, are no more in this world ; but they are living in the memory of those who had the happiness of witnessing them ; and they may have sown the seed, perhaps, of much that is estimable in their lives !

Mrs. Preston loved and indulged young people ; and most of the young men and young women who gathered round her plentiful tea-table, making her little confidences, or raising her easily raised laugh, had been parts of the joyous group of girls and boys which were duly invited

every Christmas, Twelfth Night, and Easter Monday, to romping and feasting at Mrs. Preston's; thus she was looked on by them all as a sort of third parent. Honor O'Hara called her their Sunday mother, in contradistinction to those every-day ones, who are under the unfortunate necessity of not letting their children's lives be all one holiday of ease and pleasure.

From the sort of women her daughters had turned out, it might be supposed that Mrs. Preston's indulgent benevolence of character was not sufficiently balanced by vigorous intellect: this was not the case; it merely happened, that distrusting her own ability to teach or see properly taught what she had never learned, she consented to send them to a boarding-school in Yorkshire, to be under the eye of their father's sister, the wife of a barrister there; and this lady being a silly pretender to accomplishments and society of which she knew scarcely any thing, they returned from their seven years' schooling, and their twice as many

months holidays at her house, just such Misses as might be expected. The Miss Prestons were very scantily allowanced in understanding from the first. Mrs. Fillagree's school and Mrs. Blagdon's co-teries consumed their whole stock of common sense. They were, however, good girls, inheriting their mother's kindness of nature, without her loveable simplicity. Miss Dulcy's ambition had been fired by one of the teachers at Doncaster, who wrote verses and lived on visions; she aimed, therefore, at the sentimental. Miss Dulcy talked like a book, in phrases absolutely unknown to common conversation. There were no such vulgar words in her vocabulary as crying, thinking, walking, talking; every body wept, or ruminated, or strayed, or discoursed, with her. If she asked a person to sit down, she hoped they would *occupy* a chair. Miss Dulcy copied out the elegiac stanzas and sonnets from newspapers and magazines; she painted allegorical screens and devices on souvenirs; she collected the autographs

of poetasters and Blue-stockings; she haunted churchyards in pursuit of epitaphs; and she religiously believed in the mortal existence of Goëthe's Werter.

To have seen Goëthe himself, or any other sentimental lion, Miss Dulcy would cheerfully have undertaken a pilgrimage through England: but she lived before lions were to be seen in our streets, as they now are, in flocks, like sheep; when every family of any taste or fashion has their own especial lion; every agreeable woman her lion; following them as docilely and affectionately as that of Androcles did his preserver.

And now I must be permitted to congratulate this noble order of quadrupeds upon the great revolution which has taken place in public opinion concerning their nature and habits. Fear of lions is now become more ridiculous than the fear of ghosts; distaste to them, *very bad taste* indeed! They are no longer considered savage and unsocial, devourers and destroyers, issuing from dens of dirt and desolation; but civil, tameable

creatures, possessing wit enough to have decent shelters and laws for themselves. The next step will be their general admission into all the blessings and privileges of those happy domestic animals who pur or stretch at their ease by the parlour fire, whilst the poor lion is exhibiting.

Such a consummation is devoutly to be wished; for even the slandered cat never has been more vilified than has this king of beasts.

To return to the family at Hazeldean. Miss Bella's mania ran in a different channel. She pretended to perfection in *l'usage du monde*, upon the strength of having gone once to Harrowgate with her Doncaster aunt, and boarded three weeks in the same house with two baronets' widows, and a viscount's ninth unmarried sister. She affected to be in the secrets of all the fashionable world; nay, to have a second-sight of every important event about to befall them. Nothing extraordinary happened to a coronetted individual that she did not,

on the explosion of the wonder, remind her neighbours of certain unintelligible whispers, sighs, and smiles of hers just before it became public. She often retailed paragraphs from the modish pages of the day, so embellished as to pass for parts of epistolary confidences to herself. She presided over all guessers at those mysterious allusions and provoking blanks after initials in which such newspapers abound. She was ever the first to lower or raise the various parts of her dress according to the latest fashion recorded in magazines; and by the unwearied use of the cabalistic words, "horrid! vulgar! Gothic! voted detestable!" kept the whole *little* village in awe.

If Miss Bella Preston once pronounced a head-dress "*a has-been*," though it made the wearer look like a milliner's angel, it was cast from its high place; and if she pronounced a man "*un-presentable*," it was too probable that she shamed some girl out of an existing affection for him, — certain, that she prevented him from ever inspiring another

within the jurisdiction of her sovereignty. Every person is said to have some quality or acquirement upon which they secretly pride themselves, and are lauded by others: Miss Bella's self-idolatry had for its object her felicitous memory of certain French phrases to which she used to listen at Harrowgate with admiring emulation, regretting bitterly having never tried at school to do more than read her French lessons over her stupid governess's shoulder. By some fatal imperfection either of her ear or her organs of speech, Miss Bella failed in pronouncing these phrases with an accuracy at all equal to the fidelity with which she remembered them; nay, I grieve to own, she sometimes displaced the adjective so as to produce serious consequences to all such of her hearers as were capable of relishing the ridiculous, and incapable of concealing it. The solemnity of knowledge with which Miss Bella uttered her blunders was irresistible.

Yet abating mistakes and trifles like these, the Misses Preston were good-hu-

moured, warm-hearted women, without a spark of envy in their dispositions, or a drop of vinegar in their tempers: they were not ill-looking either; but, unluckily, nature had made a gross mistake in the allotment of their persons; for it was the fashion to be *en bon point*, and Miss Bella was thin; and it was sentimental to be slender, and Miss Dulcy was fatter than one of those shapely animals whose unctuous bodies furnish nourishment for human hair, and advertisements for newspapers: however, the one sister lived in the hope of waxing, and the other of wasting, and their friends took care never to tell them the unsavoury truth that neither of them altered a hair's breadth.

Hazeldean was the only house belonging to Edenfell where the higher and inferior order of county gentry might meet occasionally: but Mrs. Preston had the good sense not to attempt forcing prejudices, or the removal of those landmarks of society, without which this world would be a scene of far greater contention, vio-

lence, wrong, insult, at best confusion, than it is at present. She sorted her company well; matching their habits and breeding: and if inharmonious persons met by chance during a morning visit, she managed them with equal regard to the feelings of each; never taking the least offence if a stiff old squire took his leave on the announcement of Mr. Chaplain of New Lodge.

Mrs. Preston remembered she was a yeoman's daughter; she was frankly social, therefore, with those of her acquaintance who, rising into gentry by dint of money made and freeholds purchased, were treated civilly by the ancient lords of the soil, yet steadily kept at a distance. As the eccentric clever Dr. Preston's wife, and since as his widow, she visited, and was visited by all, except the high nobility of the county; her house, consequently, was the neutral ground upon which both parties met, and met amicably. At her house Honor O'Hara had made most of her multifarious conquests.

The next place in point of attraction

to Hazeldean (before it in consequence) was Arthur's Court: a venerable mansion covering a great extent of ground; having a large front, widely extended wings, and an endless train of useless offices.

A stately portico, with the family arms above it, finely cut in stone, surmounted by peaceful emblems, and martial trophies, gave dignity to its appearance. The entrance was at the extremity of one of the wings, to which a broad and branching avenue of enormous walnut trees conducted from the ordinary road.

In days past the great size of the house was excellently balanced by the dimensions of the park, of which it formed the central point; its offices were then filled with servants and retainers, and its many stables and many stalls crowded with the horses of men-at-arms.

Both stables and offices had now few tenants; and chief part of what was the park, being turned into sundry money-returning pastures and arables, the house itself stood at the extremity of what re-

mained unploughed or uncloved, and was said, therefore, to have a very fine lawn in its front.

Behind it sloped the gardens; spacious still, old fashioned, abundant in fruits, flowers, clipped trees, curious arbours, marble basins, and tritons spouting water from conchs. The gardens themselves, lying much below the house, were entirely overlooked by the windows of the back apartments, and were descended into by a noble flight of stone steps from a terrace running the whole length of the house.

The long line of deep embayed windows which the dark front of Arthur's Court presented, was exactly matched by the formal lines of posts and chains festooning each side of this spacious walk: yet that formality was not displeasing; taste having originally planted honeysuckles by the side of every post, and time having wreathed their flowers with no ungraceful hand amongst the heavy carvings of the wood and the links of the iron.

The windows, too, had their ornaments, in the rich stained glass of which they were composed. Facing the north-west, at the hour of sunset they became glorious to those without, while throwing many a mellow hue upon the thoughts as well as faces of those within.

In this part of the mansion was the picture-gallery ; a stately avenue of all the beauties, warriors, statesmen, spend-thrifts, and spinsters, who had borne the name of Fitz Arthur from the time of the Conquest to the coming in of the Hanoverian race. This was the only avenue belonging to the family, (except the fruitful walnut-tree one,) which the axe had spared, and the hammer failed to make havoc with. The present possessor of this fine old seat was the representative of a very ancient and honourable family, whose wealth had been gradually diminishing for the last two centuries: the reason was obvious ; they neither made nor saved money ; they married, principally, from motives of affection ; they had large families ; they were given to hos-

pitality, and a system of indulgence to tenants; they were, besides, unluckily addicted in all political squabbles to espouse the weakest side. Perhaps upon the same principle with which a man coming unawares into a brawl, instinctively lifts his arm in defence of the person likeliest to be worsted.

Thus the Fitz Arthurs had suffered in life and limb and property for Charles the First, and James the Second; nay, had even contrived to get a share of damage in the misguided enterprise of the Duke of Monmouth: a horse suspected to have been furnished to the princely fugitive from the field of Culloden by one of the young sons, (a volunteer in the royal army,) cost his father a fair manor and goodly fishery to a crown lawyer. Sir Everard Fitz Arthur, the present Baronet, did not degenerate from many of the virtues, nor escape some of the failings of his ancestors: he was notoriously the kindest-hearted man in the county; for he let his servants cheat him, his tradespeople impose upon him, vagrants molest

him, homeless animals quarter themselves upon his demesnes, tenants remain in arrear, &c. ; he was unwearied in neighbourly acts of hospitality and liberality ; nay, he had bailed half the extravagant young men out of "durance vile," simply because they were neighbours' sons, and perhaps paid their debts afterwards, lest they should be expelled college.

Having lately become surety for a government collector, and been obliged to pay five thousand pounds for the fellow's baseness, he was now professedly living on a retrenching system, vowing he would henceforth think of paying no debts, save his own.

Sir Everard had been twice married : his first lady left only two sons, children of six and seven years ; the eldest a fine, open-hearted young man, lived to the age of three-and-twenty, and was then prematurely cut off by imprudently attempting to ford a river unusually swollen by heavy rains.

The second son, now heir to the title and estate, was an officer of cavalry, and

being in India with his regiment upon active service when the news arrived of his sadly-acquired consequence, did not deem it right in a soldier to ask leave of absence, or to effect an exchange into some regiment at home: he remained abroad, waiting a termination of hostilities. Sir Everard's offspring by "his second venture," as the old genealogies spell and designate a second marriage, were more numerous: but a few years gradually strewed them, and finally their mother, on the same earth with his first wife and first born; and there now remained only a poor, feeble, yet interesting boy of fourteen, who, in consequence of an accident during childhood, was sickly and helpless; and a school-boy of twelve.

A maiden lady, distantly related to Sir Everard, kept his house, and acquitted herself laudably in all the offices of providing for and helping company at the good Baronet's table. So admirably was she fitted for this purpose, and so discreetly did she rate man's estimate of the

real delightfulness of a woman's conversation when past fifty, that she was never heard to utter more voice than was necessary to inquire, what gentlemen would be helped to at dinner? whether they preferred green to black tea at breakfast? and to employ with precision the needful technical terms at a game of whist. It is a work of supererogation to add, that she was never heard to scold, even though the constant object of the school-boy Fitz Arthur's mischief; than whom a more provoking, overbearing, mischievous wight never existed.

Delaval Fitz Arthur, Sir Everard's heir, had entered the army with well-founded expectations of rapid promotion, by means of his family wealth and influence; yet was he now, at the age of five-and-twenty, only a captain of dragoons. His troop was earned by the skill and intrepidity with which he conducted a difficult attack upon one of Tippoo Saib's important posts, in the Ghauts of the Mysore. Adequate sums for the purchase of such a commission at a much earlier period in

the young officer's military history had been lodged more than once by Sir Everard in the hands of his agent; but the money always found a different destination; and Delaval was either too delicate, or too high-minded, or too dutiful, to remonstrate. His father, like most men of boundless good nature, and circumscribed intellect, living in the habit of benefiting every human creature except the very one whom he loved most, and who best deserved his kindness. At the period of the collector's defalcation, while Sir Everard was groaning over his own unwise confidence, his unconscious son was making the best of his way to England, with a desperate liver complaint to balance against the joy of returning home. His return, indeed, was the consequence of this complaint, for the war was not ended; and, just landed from Bengal after an absence of eight years, he was negotiating for a majority in a regiment come home in the same fleet, when the news of his father's pecuniary

misfortune and sudden retrenchments was accidentally told him at Falmouth by a relation. He wrote immediately to his agent to stop all proceedings about the exchange, generously resigned his own wishes, and hurried to Edenfell, to appropriate the legacy of two thousand pounds left him by a superior officer to the restoration of some of his father's hastily-abandoned comforts.

The expected return of Captain Fitz Arthur, whom all the elder inhabitants of Edenfell remembered as a child and youth with particular affection, was an epoch in the history of the village, and, as such, formed a frequent theme of discourse. Sir Everard himself loved to dwell upon it, and he talked incessantly of this excellent son, without the ordinary fear of repetitions, that of wearying his hearers. On these occasions, he never failed conducting his auditors into the gallery at Arthur's Court, to exhibit Delaval's picture, done when a boy of eleven; ever accompanying the exhi-

bition by the pathetic exclamation of, "O that my poor boy may be like this now!"

Honor O'Hara, to whom this picture was oftener shown than to any one else, never looked on it without secretly thinking it represented the most ill-favoured, glum school-boy, that ever sulked through a sitting.

A *sitting*, however, it was obvious poor Delaval had not been indulged in. It was painted standing, and standing in what the itinerant artist called a *nat'ral poster*. This posture was so unnatural, that the boy was actually obliged to be held up by a servant, during the whole execution of himself and his picture.

The figure *stood*, indeed, with its legs across, leaning upon a huge paper kite, to which it threatened total destruction, maugre the limner's ingenious device for preserving the equilibrium, by sticking one arm a-kimbo on the hip.

The costume of poor Delaval was quite worthy of the commemorating pencil, being a shapeless suit, intended to fit

the body and limbs, and so produce the effect of a naked, drab-coloured child: but failing of that notable purpose, yet not wide enough for folds; being withal provided with lines of braided work, reaching at due distances from the chin to the extremity of a waist cunningly extended by the tailor, (of course for the sake of having a greater quantum of stuff to charge for,) gave the whole figure more the semblance of a ladder than that of a human body.

To Delaval's hair nature had been liberal, and on the real boy it waved from his brow and round his neck in rich and comely clusters: the artist, meritoriously anxious to evince gratitude for patronage, had elongated this waving hair far below the shoulders, so that it now hung in two straight lines parallel with the cheeks, till it reached the breast; where suddenly taking a preposterous fancy of curling, it bushed forth into an absolute cape, leaving the non-descript face within, to be mistaken for some animal between an owl and a lap-dog.

Upon the face itself the artist had exhausted the secrets of his art : he was professedly of the school of Guido, being *chaste and severe*.

His intentions were faultless — his pencil faithless ; so that under his hand even the youthful flesh of a child resembled pewter more than pearls. True to this principle of severity, the boy's features were rendered with relentless exactness ; and as they were then in that unpruned state which nature's finger sometimes leads into regularity of beauty, sometimes cherishes into luxuriant expression, divested now of their juvenile glow, and given in shades of pea-green and light slate-colour, the whole face stood staring with a pair of eyes like bottled gooseberries — the very effigy of rueful ugliness.

Sir Everard's eye for painting was as incapable of education as some ears are for music : — he literally could not distinguish between a Raphael and a sign-post ; though he possessed some rare specimens of that divine master in his eating-

hall: his easy good nature made him a most persuadable person; he was, therefore, persuaded, at the time, to believe in the likeness of this daub; and since then had daily gazed on the memorial of an absent son till the perfidious copy supplanted the original in his memory.

“There’s my Delaval!” would he exclaim, with an air of satisfaction, every time he showed this base counterfeit to a stranger; and immediately associating every well-known perfection with that son’s image, never reflected that bystanders saw in it only a lubberly lad.

“Well! he is a good creature I dare say,” Honoria would smile and say to herself at such times; “but he’s hideously plain.”

The arrival of Captain Fitz Arthur gave her little reason to alter her opinion, though he was not in the least like his portrait. His features were far better — his complexion much worse; he was half dead with biliousness and sea-sickness, and he was moreover worn to a shadow. There was nothing, in short, to redeem

Captain Fitz Arthur for an instant in her mind, except a pair of large, deep-blue eyes, (marvellously shaded with long dark lashes,) the soft expression of which often threw over his sallow countenance almost the charm of beauty. Having thus favoured my fair readers with the glimpse of a well-born lover for my heroine, (for, unless her eyes miss fire most unaccountably, Honor O'Hara *must* hit a man placed in Delaval Fitz Arthur's situation,) I will now take the liberty of stepping back to complete my tour of the immediate neighbourhood.

“ In an opposite direction to Arthur's Court, full five miles from Edenfell-end, stand the handsome house and grounds (as the Road-book expresses it,) of Samuel Shafto, Esq. M. P., skirting the celebrated park and chase of Ravenshaw, the seat of the Right Hon. Earl Wearmouth.” The last-named place describes itself: a nobleman's mansion, with all its appurtenances of woods and manors, rooks and deer; now rarely visited by its owner, a man in the meridian of life,

holding a high station in the ministry, consequently obliged to live nearly always in or about London.

The other place was a thorough modern mansion ; with a white front ; French windows ; verandahs ; green blinds : orange trees in tubs, and exotics in china pots, crowding up the space just before the entrance ; invisible fences ; conservatories ; pineries ; graperies ; an ice-house ; a show-dairy ; all contained within two circles : the first comprising a lawn with its well-assorted shrubbery ; the second a wider sweep of young plantations destined to grow up into a most *perfect place*, duly dotted with clumps, and environed, according to the best rules of art, by a belt of orderly firs.

The owner of this mansion, though he sat in parliament, and might be expected to carry some talent thither, either had none to carry, or wore it within him, as the Miss Primroses did each her guinea in her pocket, without spending it : or imagining that, as he came in only for a borough, he might be excused

thinking as well as speaking amongst the more dignified personages representing counties, or sitting there in virtue of ministerial offices, — whatever influenced him, influenced Mr. Shafto was, to sit still and say nothing, let what would be going on : he had, however, one virtue — conspicuous attachment to the representative of his King, whoever he might be, at the head of affairs. Mr. Shafto always voted for the Crown ; never regarding who came and asked his vote. He was much too magnanimous to show the least resentment, much too respectful to feel the least dissatisfaction, at the dismissal of his dearest friend from a place of public trust ; thus he always stood, though hosts fell around him.

The rent-roll of the Shafto estate did not exceed 5000*l.* per annum : this thirty or forty years ago, in a northern county, would have been sufficient for a very handsome style of living ; but Mrs. Shafto found it too small (even with some secret additions,) for *the appearance* she deemed it proper to make ; and choosing to be

thought the wife of a man of 10,000*l.* a year, gave herself the full consequence of such a reputation, at the expense of substantial ease.

Mrs. Shafto had five daughters to marry, and one younger son to make great friends for — her eldest of course was to have the estate. She calculated the enormous expense of country-house-keeping after the old fashion of general invitations, abundant dinners, flowing wines : the possible advantage from it was slender in comparison with every second winter spent in London, in a show-house, with equipage and liveries fit for the Ring in Hyde Park, a box at the Opera, balls, and fashionable dress. She *took her partie*. Mrs. Shafto became suddenly exceedingly fine ; introduced the town style (as she chose to term it) amongst her simpler neighbours ; fainted at the sight of plain joints even on her side-table ; denounced all “ plenteous boards ;” gave only *small, elegant* dinners of French cookery ; turned pale if she saw a young lady drink any liquid

stronger than iced-water, or heard any one ask twice for any thing save vegetables ; insisted upon her husband's abolition of the old custom of sitting after dinner, when the ladies were withdrawn, longer than ten minutes : and so completely established the system of starvation in her house, (adroitly coupling it with a notion of elegance,) that her very servants melted away without complaint, for the sake of serving so elegant a mistress ; and her three eldest daughters in their trapesey Grecian dresses, with long genteel faces, and *vastly fashionable* bending figures, were not inaptly caricatured as three willows, with the title of the *Shades* painted below them.

A gallant wit of their acquaintance having interlined the word Elysian between the article and the noun, the caricature turned into a compliment ; and the Miss Shaftos, known as *the Elysian Shades*, rose into consequence with the Newspapers, and Kensington-Garden haunters, for a whole season of opera and park going.

Proud of this notoriety of *the second table*, the three sister shades returned to Shafto Park more insupportably disdainful and supercilious than ever. Importing to Northumberland the new fashion of short waists and adhesive drapery, each believed herself the Lady C— C— of the county; and because their skins were like lime, their eyes a sort of water colour, they dared to class them with the breathing, beaming, sparkling alabaster of complexion, the almost purple light of those goddess-like eyes which we still see kindling and glowing in their painted resemblances. Upon that form of a Venus, shaded only by *one* graceful robe, the eye *might* glance with admiration; but on those of the spiky Miss Shaftos, so unattired, to glance, was to poniard yourself.

During the period of these ladies' last visit to London, Honor O'Hara had arrived from Ireland. As their mamma did not admit the vulgar Mrs. Meredith into her visiting-book (and who can wonder at that!) it is not marvellous

that our heroine's very existence was unknown or unnoticed by any of them, till about twelve months after her settlement at Edenfell ; when it suited Mrs. Shafto to write an exceedingly civil note (for Mrs. Shafto did all lady-like things in a lady-like manner) to their clergyman's wife, requesting permission to have the occasional use of a room at the rectory, to accommodate Signor Vocalino, who was about to pass six weeks at his Grace of ——'s, and had kindly consented to her earnest entreaty that he would give the Miss Shaftos a lesson twice a week, provided they met him half way. Edenfell just lay at the right point : so to the rectory it was agreed the Misses were to repair every Wednesday and Saturday, to squall in concert with the Signor, and stun the good minister while writing his sermon.

The first morning appointed for these ladies' appearance was somewhat pleasantly expected by Honoria. She was barely sixteen then, and she felt the want of acquaintance better suited to her taste and

early habits than the untalented, half-rustic Miss Prestons, and others of the second order of gentry. She naturally reckoned securely upon intimacy (at least with herself) succeeding to obligation on one side, and accommodation on the other. It could not enter into the head of an O'Hara, that she, the grand-daughter of an English country-gentleman, the daughter of an Irish one, bearing a commission in his Majesty's service — the niece, too, of a minister of our Established Church — saying nothing of her uncle in a high station abroad — could be considered as quite below the Miss Shaftos, who had but a country-gentleman for their father.

Honorina had been as much accustomed to play the *great lady of the place* at Bally-Garry as they were at Edenfell; therefore, though she certainly felt humiliated, and disconcerted, and almost fretted, whenever she glanced at the dirt and disorder of all without and all within her present residence, the handsome, orderly house of her great-aunt Mrs.

Ally, with its fair appointments of jaunting-car and well-clad serving men, rose in agreeable vision before her, and spoke of a home, in times past, as respectable, if not as fine, as Shafto Place.

At all events, Mrs. Meredith, upon whom the odium of vulgar sluttishness must fall, was no blood to her. Hetty Macready, the indignant Hetty Macready, reminded her of this every day; finishing her hot-mouthed declaration, that “she *would spake* her mind to her own child, let Miss Honor frown ever so!” with these memorable words of true Irish transition from anger to fondness: “So you may hold up your head, jewel, anyhow, still; and sorrow on them says there’s a fairer face in the county! Didn’t you suck Hetty Macready’s milk? and who shall say black’s the white of a Macready’s eye? And is it the O’Haras, dear, that arn’t thought the good company all over the world?”

Honor believed they *were the good company* as religiously as her foster-mother did; and she held out her hand

with a smile of tender pardon to the self-privileged follower who incurred her displeasure by uttering an opinion of her uncle's wife.

Hetty took and fondled the little soft hand with her hands of horn, and her lips still red, but thin as scarlet thread. "And you'll be giving this dilicat hand, darling, to the handsomest man that ever wore shamrock! and we'll be after going back to our jewel of a country! Och, and it's Ireland all the world over! and the Irishman with his free heart and gen'rous hand! Blessings on the sowl of my country — England's a pig-sty to it!"

To this assertion Honoria could not assent: she recollected the failings of her country, with its virtues and its delightfulness; and she could never forget her first emotion upon entering the cotters' houses in Northumberland; seeing their little homesteads of stall or stye, hen-house and patch of garden; and observing their beautifully-whitened hearths and fire-places (white as the snows on the

Cheviots) whence the smoke flew lightly away through conducting chimnies.

Pleasing Hetty Macready as well as she was able with her answer, she quitted her, on seeing the Shafto carriage driving up to the door.

The young ladies and their mamma encountered Mrs. Meredith doing the honours of their entrance, as they were proceeding, with lifted petticoats and carefully-picked steps, through the front court. Many civil speeches, and *much obligeds* — many “My good madam, how sorry we are to incommode,” &c., reached the ear of Honoria, as she stood, half-expectant and half-welcoming, on the threshold of the opened parlour-door: but not a word of reply to her aunt’s servile entreaty that Mrs. Shafto would do her the great honour of stepping into her parlour, and taking some refreshment; at the same moment naming her husband’s niece, rather from the confusion occasioned by her awful sense of what she was soliciting, than from a wish of bringing Honoria forward.

“Pass on, my loves!” cried the mother, as her daughters, coldly bowing, and hurrying past Miss O'Hara, paused one well-bred instant, that they might not take precedence of their instructress in etiquette. The young ladies gladly obeyed, not, however, without an insolent glance back at Honoria, whose richly-dark face glowed up with a full flush of self-respect.

“Worthy Mr. Meredith's niece, you say!” repeated Mrs. Shafto, with perfect condescension; “a pretty countenance — a very pretty countenance! You will not be suffered to keep her long with you, Mrs. Meredith: I see some vastly well-looking young men about our neighbourhood here that are most likely of your acquaintance. Chaplin's sons, for instance. I do assure you,” (here the lady obligingly made a feint of lowering her voice) “Mr. Shafto speaks so highly of Chaplin's fidelity and honesty, in spite of the large fortune he is making under him and Sir Thomas Sykes, that I should be particularly glad to hear some time hence

of one of his sons proposing for Miss O'Meara; but I must go and look after my own daughters;" and away glided the courtly and ghastly Mrs. Shafto, meaning at *that time* to make the most delightful impression of graceful manner and wondrous condescension upon the obscure girl at the Rectory. Honoria was still standing; every drop of her proud Irish blood in her face, and her heart throbbing, as if to break its way through her bodice.—Never had she felt anger, —towering anger before: but this was the heart's anger; the strongest, the most enduring of all.

When a naturally sweet disposition is made thoroughly indignant, the feeling is stronger, indeed, and more lasting than in persons of fiery temperament: bursts of violence being a sort of chimney, by which the dark vapours escape; and where these are not, the vapours gather and blacken, till they fill the small tenement that lodges them.

As Mrs. Meredith turned round with a boasting exclamation of the great Lady's

uncommon kindness and gratifying observations, (for Mrs. Meredith had her private views in consequence of such kindness and such praise,) Honoria putting up her lip with a scorn which became her youth; "Miss O'Meara! and hoping I will marry the son of her husband's steward! — O this big little heart!" laying her hand upon her hard-heaving side.

"Steward, indeed!" began Mrs. Meredith, but Honoria's tongue, for once, was too nimble for her. Exclaiming, "*I must* have a run after my good-humour!" with the bound of a fawn, but a different sparkle in her imperious eyes, she jumped over a low window into a meadow behind the house; and was soon on the other side of the river, and along the hills, as if "chasing the young roe."

The chase was successful; she came back long before their early tea hour, with her hat stuck full of corn flowers, her hands full of grasses of various sorts, (and I know few bouquets more beautiful, except it be the first spring-leaves of

plants,) and her features regilded by smiles. It must be owned, however, that resentment of the affront put upon her by Mrs. Shafto's condescension, and her daughter's insolence, was still at her heart: and determining to show these ladies how little she valued their notice, she never appeared afterwards, when they came to meet their Italian; and stoutly refused going with Mrs. Meredith to view a dinner-service of very fine china, which the great Lady of the place *politely thought it just possible Mrs. Meredith might like to see*, being made after the pattern of one ordered by H. R. H. the Duke of ——. The details of this visit disgusted Honoria more than ever; she found that the housekeeper of Shafto Place had not only done the honours of the china, but of the phantom of a luncheon, which was to indemnify Mrs. Meredith for her two o'clock dinner. Mrs. Shafto had friends staying in the house, so she was only able to glide in for five minutes, just to see, she said, that Mrs. Meredith was taken care of. Most condescendingly did she

decline either eating or sitting down, moving about all the time, yet begging Mrs. Meredith to go on refreshing herself; in short, demonstrating, by every well-bred means in her power, that she did not consider her guest fit company for a person of her consequence.

This noble entertainment, given immediately upon the departure of Signor Vocallino from the North, was understood and meant to strike out, by one capital stroke, the Misses Shafto's debt for accommodation. But Mrs. Meredith managed so dexterously to show how willingly she would "sell her birthright for a mess of pottage," and how easily Mrs. Shafto might purchase the privilege of speaking of her with that sort of contumely with which those people are mentioned who are needy or mean-spirited enough to live upon petty favours, — that certain arrangements were entered into between these high contracting powers; which virtually bound the one to supply the Rectory with dairy produce and billet-wood during the twelve calendar months; and

the other, to the practice of continual eulogiums on, and subserviency to, the Lady of the Place.

By this means, Mrs. Shafto so exactly defined the line of separation between them as acquaintances, that she hoped it would be impossible for any one to think of bringing forward any young woman connected with so low a person. Honor O'Hara, therefore, must fall back into that obscurity, from which she could perceive her appearance and manners were now bringing her. It would be of little avail to the innocent girl, that she was herself well-born and well-bred, if she were always coupled in idea with her uncle's under-bred, servile-spirited wife. Mrs. Shafto, therefore, became ostentatiously punctual and particular in her useful presents. Mrs. Meredith having in this way achieved her point of securing a greater surplus of money from house-keeping for the purchase of furbelows, and quite contented with a lofty recognition every Sunday at church from the ladies of the Place, persisted in speaking

of them every where with a fulsomeness of encomium, and an exaggeration of their high condition in society, truly humbling and disgusting to Honoria.

Not that Honoria was so unjust (even though bribed to some little failure of the kind, by her own near interest in the matter) as to think Mrs. Shafto ought to have visited Mrs. Meredith. She felt that her uncle's wife had not one claim to the notice of well-bred, well-educated persons in any station of life ; she thought that not one even of her own breeding, could seek her society from any hope of pleasure in it. What, then, was to authorise her in expecting it from the lady of a Member of Parliament? She did not expect it — she could not wish it : and if Mrs. Shafto and her daughters had persevered in their former sweeping curtsy at church, or wherever else they might encounter her and her aunt, they would never have incurred her resentment. But she felt that there is an honest and a dishonest traffic in our civil intercourse with each other, as well as in our bargain and sale transactions ; and

that unless Mrs. Shafto had purposed receiving a service from the wife of Mr. Meredith, as the civility of one gentlewoman to another, she should not have put such an affront upon his respectable character and sacred function, as that of employing his wife like a menial, and rewarding her like one, with a condescending word, and the wages of a few pounds of butter.

The Shaftos and the Fitz Arthurs being distantly related, Honoria more than once stumbled upon them in her visits to Arthur's Court, just before its heir arrived : but she could be as mortifying as the Misses Shafto themselves, when she thought a person deserved mortification at her hands : and at those times, a curtsy of well-bred distance, the calm look of perfect non-acquaintance, succeeded by all the charms of her own playful tones and countenance, as she turned with affectionate familiarity to the open-hearted Baronet; these were her sharpest weapons, and they pierced in proportion to their polish.

At such times, the Misses Shafto pronounced her "impertinent," with half-shut lips; their mother declaring in a low voice to Mrs. Fothergill, that "she was the most extraordinary young woman she had ever met with! Such total ignorance of what was due to superiors, she could not have imagined in any thing civilized! she must deprecate the dreadful revolutionary principle so evidently spreading through all classes! it became more and more the duty of every well-educated person of a certain condition in life, to keep down the inferior people! it was unwise—really it was worse than unwise, (she feared she must say,) in their cousin Sir Everard, to permit an under-born and under-bred girl like this Miss O'Hara (Mrs. Shafto never forgot a name when it was important to be accurate,) to address him with such saucy freedom. She really could not comprehend where the girl could have seen any thing like that manner of hers, now *caressante*, now *moqueuse*, now *tendre*, with which she contrived to give herself

the air of having lived with people of a certain set. At all events, it did not become her to assume such an air."

In fact, Mrs. Shafto might have added, that she thought it was extremely impertinent in any obscure clergyman's niece to be prettier and more agreeable than the daughters of a man of 10,000*l.* a year.

The Misses Shafto themselves had discovered not only Honoria's glow of freshness and beauty, but the magical effect of her manner. They could have envied the flashings of that ever-varying diamond! — yet while watching its bright play, and wondering why they did not dazzle and delight like her, they were too stupid to find out, that to shine, we must be solid: and that without a centre of good sense and good feeling, attempted sportiveness is but impertinence, wit ill-nature!

Miss Shafto was just at the age when women who have been educated solely with a view to *establishing* themselves, are peculiarly apt to start at the very

shadow of a new competitor for admiration. Miss Shafto was six and twenty : she was actually come to that age, which, when she was fifteen, nay, till she entered the precincts of twenty-one, she had always openly denounced as the period at which ended the youth of woman ; at which began the dreadful era of old-maidism. She often remembered now, with more vexation than real remorse, how invariably she had blazoned the twenty-fifth birthday of every single woman in their neighbourhood : how many brilliant things had been said by herself, and by the *very agreeable men*, to whom she was thus displaying her lively talent and her *great good-nature*. Every biting sarcasm uttered by these *charming men*, upon young ladies *un peu passée* ; upon their dexterous choice of pink ribbons, instead of lilac and apple-green ; upon their exceedingly assiduous, and most particularly amiable endeavours to make the agreeable, &c. — all these enchanting pleasantries, were now as sweet to Miss Shafto's remembrance, as the caustic ink

of a northern reviewer is to the luckless author whose work he is bespattering. She heard her own tauntings in every careless remark which hit the subject by chance. She believed the insult intentional; and she never saw a group of *just-come-outs*, laughing together, that she did not suppose her singlehood the cause of their merriment. The only revenge she had in her power, was that of picking a quarrel with every match made in the county. Not a marriage took place which Miss Shafto did not benevolently bemoan: the bridegroom always had a fault; he was so plain! or so silly! or so ill-mannered! or he was a mere fortune-hunter! or he was so much too old, or so much too young, for the lady he made a wife! in short, it was as clear as noonday, that Miss Shafto would not have married him!

Still, however, intending to enter the happy state with some one, she saw the necessity of dressing exactly like her sisters of twenty and twenty-one, who *were out*; and resolutely keeping back

those of seventeen and eighteen, who were yet in the school-room. Mrs. Shafto was beginning to be seriously uneasy on the subject of her elder daughters' establishments: all her plans in their favour had failed. She had regularly paid court to the country gentlemen, till Miss Matilda, the youngest of the three, had been seen by them during two years. Nothing coming of it, she gave the country up as a losing game; and immediately resolved upon making a great effort in London.

With the most meritorious wish of assisting their mother, the daughters had no talent for getting themselves off her hands: she saw this; and knew, therefore, that the only chance of success was a large theatre like the capital, where well-dressed puppets may be skilfully played, and no one discover the moving wires or directing hand. Sisters dressed alike generally produce a good effect: at least they attract momentary attention. The Misses Shafto gowns, therefore, were always fac-similes. Unfortunately the

wearers themselves were as alike in shape, complexion, and features; so that there was some danger of their never being wooed except as a corporate body. Men talked of them in the lump, as those *nice-looking girls*, those *fashionable young women*; but never individualized them. There was, however, a real difference between them; and an eye as sharp as that of the practised shepherd, who knows every sheep's face in his flock, would have discovered at a glance, that Miss Shafto looked sullen and sarcastic; Miss Augusta sharp and spiteful; Miss Matilda purely stupid.

Miss Shafto's, barring its revolting expression, was the best face; Miss Augusta's, saving its leanness, the best proportioned figure; and Miss Matilda's, except for their unmeaningness, the best-coloured eyes.

Of Miss Matilda's settlement in marriage, Mrs. Shafto secretly entertained the strongest hopes: she was blessedly stupid; comfortably silent; delightfully easy to shove about into any place, opi-

nion, dress, liking, or unliking, her mother chose her to fill, adopt, wear, entertain, or dismiss. She had been twice in love already, by Mrs. Shafto's express desire.

Her first fire burnt for the youngest brother of Lord Wearmouth, a youth of eighteen, who came for six weeks' shooting on the moors at Ravenshaw. Their near neighbourhood, his youth, his solitude, the circumstance of this being his first escape from a tutor's house, the happy chances which somehow threw Miss Matilda daily in his way during his rambles, were all solid grounds of expectation : it is true, he would rarely give up his savage freedom, and dine like a civilized man at Shafto Place ; yet, it was hoped this very savage love of liberty, might induce him to prefer a wife of his own choosing, to one perhaps recommended hereafter by his elder brother.

Mrs. Shafto was always in preparation for her daughter's elopement. But Mr. Charles Barrington's heart was smit with a different passion ; he panted for

glory : he sought and found both that and death at the same moment. He fell in Holland with a pair of colours in the hand Mrs. Shafto ever afterwards insinuated, had been plighted to her poor girl.

The young lady's second flame was for an old bachelor. But though she gave up dancing for cribbage ; and the study of botany for the art of cookery ; the ungrateful Sir John ended her courtship by his marriage with his house-keeper. With this mortifying disappointment had terminated Mrs. Shafto's plans upon the country ; her future plots had London for their theatre ; though she did not neglect meanwhile, any noble game that might by chance be seen taking its flight across Northumberland.

Matters were in this state with the family at the Place, when Captain Fitz Arthur arrived at Arthur's Court.

CHAP. II.

FOR the first few weeks after his arrival Captain Fitz Arthur mixed little with the society round Edenfell; and when he did so, his extreme ill health, and occupied mind, (for his whole soul was intent upon getting his father out of his pecuniary difficulties,) made him no striking addition to a dinner table, no ornament to a tea-party; and certainly enabled him to perform very awkwardly, any part in those merry gipsyings (as they are termed,) which carry all the youthful population of rural neighbourhoods, on foot, in carriages, in caravans, to dance somewhere on the grass, (no matter where, so it be but from home,) or leaves them searching nuts or strawberries among the woods.

Captain Fitz Arthur had quitted the paternal roof at seventeen: after an absence of eight years, he returned to his home. Every thing belonging to that home

was fresh in his memory, and dear to his heart ; but many were gone that used to render it cheerful : and though he loved his father, he felt that there was much of Sir Everard's character which he must learn, ere he could contribute to the happiness of those dependent upon him.

The graves of his brother, of his little sisters, of his step-mother herself, were melancholy substitutes for the play-fellow of his boyish years, for the kind woman who had treated him with maternal tenderness, and for the pretty innocents whom he had left smiling in their mother's arms. He passed the churchyard in which they lay, with a swelling heart, and gushing eyes ; he was alone in the chaise (his servant having ridden forward to apprise the family) ; and throwing himself back into the corner of it, after one earnest gaze over the low wall of the burying ground, he shed his unwitnessed tears in freedom.

The whole drive from Edenfell was fraught with softening associations. It cost him many a sigh ; and after the first

evening, Arthur's Court cost him many more.

Trees that had been the friends of his childhood ; some old oaks that he revered as though they were all so many Adams and Abrahams, were vanished along with him that had played under their shade, and " their place would know them no more." One great avenue of elms was at that moment lying on the earth, like a routed army of giants : the young soldier passed between their regular lines, with a feeling something similar to that with which he moved over battle-fields, when their noise and strife were done. He looked to the right and left ; trees of noble growth, in their very prime of age, were lying with all their green boughs and branches on them, as he had seen many a brave companion lie on the plains of India : he paused to moralize for a moment, over the fallen habitation of many a rook and raven, fallen with the tree they lodged in. At that instant the heavy sound of the woodman's axe was heard ; — it was heard again, and again,

and again ; the next moment came the crash — the fall — the long echoing of the heavy boughs ; another elm was fallen ! Fitz Arthur hurried on.

He turned in another direction to a part of the demesne which bore the name of the abbey. It was a large grove of remarkably fine limes, planted by that very ancestor who suffered for assisting Charles Edward. Its stately rows of double trees, with their high intermingling tops, and spreading branches below, bore a striking resemblance to the aisles of Gothic churches ; and in moonlight nights, Delaval Fitz Arthur had often lingered there, when a boy, to hearken to the wind pealing among their high tops like the sound of an organ soaring along the arches of a cathedral. What was his delight to find this grove had been spared ! yet certain marks on the principal trees proved them destined to the axe.

An ordinary heir might have felt indignation at this threatened havoc with property which must eventually belong

to himself; and have felt inclined to question, if not its legality, its equity: but I must do Captain Fitz Arthur the justice to allow, that his generous heart was sensible only to a pang of sorrow for the necessities which had brought his father to this, and which he now feared, for the first time, were of unaccountable magnitude. At this moment, therefore, he took the resolution of enquiring, with all the respect and tenderness of a son, into the nature and extent of his father's incumbrances: he did so soon afterwards; and he found them, as he feared, numerous, harassing, and painfully burthensome.

Sir Everard had gone on increasing his need of an enlarging income, by every year giving, or lending, or letting himself be robbed of large sums; never altering his stile of house-keeping, or the old family customs of keeping foxhounds and harriers; driving six horses; giving annual dinners to clubs, corporations, tenants, and colliers; doing all this, without either raising his rents by the

usual summary process, or by the right and just one of bettering the lands from which they were to be produced. To pay his regular Christmas bills in the same good old fashion, became every year of course more difficult. So lands were mortgaged, woods cut down, lucrative fisheries and coal pits let on long leases at low rents, for the sake of a high premium laid down at the instant. Since the death of his last wife, Sir Everard's ruin had been rapid: she, like his first lady, had judiciously influenced his will, and restrained his profusely liberal disposition. Mrs. Fothergill had neither the right, the ability, nor the privilege of doing more than superintending his house: she managed her limited department according to the most approved rules of handsome house-keeping; and Sir Everard always giving her the money necessary for every day's expenditure, afforded her no reason for interfering with his other disbursements.

Left alone, therefore, with his own thoughtless kindness of heart, and in-

different quality of head, the well-meaning Baronet found himself at last unable to raise the five thousand pounds required to pay the collector's forfeited fine, unless he submitted to the most degrading imposition from a money-lender. He, therefore, took the spirited resolution of cutting down timber to twice the amount permitted him every ten years by the laws of the estate ; providing against the probable contingency of his death before the return of the second ten years, by encumbering a small property in Cumberland, (meant for his invalid son Hylton,) with the acquittal of the debt thus contracted to his heir.

This expedient, together with the inadequate, yet grievous and amiable sacrifice of all his own personal luxuries ; such as an old Swiss valet, a stud of beautiful hunters, the six state coach-horses, his annual visit to Scarborough, an aviary of curious birds, and a most expensive correspondence with Messrs. Root and Branch, the florists near London ; — these were all poor Sir Everard's modes of redeem-

ing large estates, and restoring family dignity.

Captain Fitz Arthur read his father's character quickly ; he loved its goodness, honoured the integrity of his purposes, and pitied without reprobating the lamentable weakness of his disposition. He foresaw, that in this very easiness of nature, he should find a sure means of working the desired reformation in his habits ; and satisfied of this, he had more spirits to study the mystery of Sir Everard's extreme embarrassment.

Fitz Arthur suspected roguery or scandalous neglect somewhere, in addition to the Baronet's profusion ; and he found it in the conduct of a steward appointed on the death of their former faithful one.

This man was not wilfully dishonest, but he was virtually so, by neglecting his master's rights, receiving a great salary for doing little, and gaining popularity by a pompous display of influence over his employer. Thus he was always able to appear in the high character of a

patron amongst the tenantry and work-people, by obtaining for them all the unreasonable demands or reductions they chose to clamour for.

Captain Fitz Arthur's first act of delegated power was to discharge this steward. His next, to commence an immediate reformation in the expenditure at Arthur's Court.

In one capital article Captain Fitz Arthur differed from most reformists; he applied himself solely to the practicable, and he struck first and hardest at the giants of the forest. He cashiered at once, all the useless, impertinent, drunken hangers-on of the kennel and stables; and not only advertised the gentlemen of the Fitz Arthur hunt, that there would be no more hunting under that title, but advertised the hounds themselves for sale.

Of course, a pack of enemies, as clamorous and more furious than the dogs they lamented, were instantly full cry after his good name. Fitz Arthur went on, as though he heard them not. The kennel and the stables emptied of expensive

tenants, Fitz Arthur saw himself enabled to re-instate four of the six coach horses, and to restore the Swiss valet. The first were dear to his father's heart rather than his pride; the Baronet almost identifying such state with the memory of his father: the other was necessary to his comfort, for Wilhelm had served his master thirty years, and had originally won his claim to preference over every later servant, by nursing Sir Everard abroad through a contagious fever of peculiar malignity. Sir Everard had dismissed him upon a pension, because he thought the appearance of a valet, was wrong in one under embarrassed circumstances.

With the concurrence of Mrs. Fothergill, our anxious reformist curtailed the number of courses and dishes at the family table; but he suffered the great baskets of cut bread, and the deep flagons of home-brewed, to stand as usual in the porch of the servants' entrance, for wayfarers and errand carriers. The huge yule clogs at Christmas in the servants'

hall and kitchen were laid on with yet greater plenty: meat, coals, and blankets were as bounteously bestowed as ever upon the aged poor. Not a single labourer was discharged, nor any one's wages lowered. — Yet, with all this humane consideration, Captain FitzArthur could not escape obloquy.

For some time his name was another title for a degenerate, mean-spirited, penurious fellow, whom all the county ought to unite against and send to Coventry. Four or five roguish servants, quickly dismissed by him, and one or two cheating colliery agents threatened with public disgrace, joined their under-breath voices to the more open-mouthed set of jovial middle-aged and spendthrift young men, who were accustomed to live at free quarters upon Sir Everard, by favor of their privilege, as members of his hunt.

For awhile, therefore, the *vox populi* was all against poor Delaval: but by degrees its murmurs died away, and were finally lost in a rising swell of honest recantation, and warm esteem.

The poorer order found the heir of Arthur's Court considerate and helpful to them; the middling class found him liberal, just, and exact; the rich and the worthless alone saw him regardless of their peculiar accommodation. Yet Christianly courteous to all, by degrees his social character rose with his moral one, into estimation. Having removed a heavy load from his father, by the sacrifice of his own immediate advantage, Delaval's health gradually returned with the ease of his spirit; and the animating, amiable disposition of the boy, so kindly remembered at Edenfell, was again recognised in the war-practised soldier.

A vein of pleasantry, not amounting to wit or humour, nor ever debased by ridicule, enabled him to give life to the every-day topics of every-day society, without exciting envy, or creating offence. He amused without alarming; and pleased every one, more than they were conscious of at the time, because he sincerely wished to see every one pleased.

The genteel inhabitants immediately in and about Edenfell, principally consisted of persons who ~~no~~ knew more of the world than was to be learned from a few books, and a little conversation within the limits of their own circle: simple, worthy, housewifely women; and men, without that enlargement of mind, and those refinements of taste which are insensibly acquired by the most moderate capacities, when favoured by liberal intercourse with mankind. The attempt at interesting such persons in abstract speculations or graceful discussions of "the vast, the wonderful, the wild," would have been folly: the individual who had attempted it might have delivered an oration, but he could not reasonably have expected any interchange of ideas. Captain Fitz Arthur benevolently stooping to their level, contentedly left them to imagine him not a whit wiser than themselves. His best acquirements and his peculiar sentiments he reserved for the few that would take the trouble to dive for them; or for those whose talents and

sentiments unconsciously elicited his. Content with being beloved, he never dreamt of making himself admired.

Beyond the first two miles round Edenfell he found society better suited to his former habits. His high character as a gentleman and a soldier gave him the *entrée* of all the first houses in the county; so that whenever he chose to refresh his mind with more polished manners and more intellectual conversation than were to be found in his native village, he was certain of enjoying them at —— Castle, or at the Dean of ——'s, &c.

In his intercourse with the gentler sex, Captain Fitz Arthur was too open and honourable, and observing, to make the obvious conquest of any woman except of her whom he might wish to inspire with a reciprocal attachment. There were few unattached women within the round of his Indian or English connections, who, after six months' familiar acquaintance, would have refused Captain Fitz Arthur's hand, or denied their whole heart to him, had he previously given them his: yet

not one beauty was known to have died for him ; nor was it whispered about that any such individual was in a fair way of doing so. This, simply, because he was above the criminal weakness of gratifying vanity at the price of a virtuous woman's peace.

To some sort of men their virtues are sanctified and holy traitors. Even so it was with Captain Fitz Arthur. This honourable conduct towards a sex which had particular attractions for one of his domestic and fondly-inclined disposition, did him disservice with the only one he wished seriously to interest. Honor O'Hara (who I warned my readers would make sure work with his affections) was at the age of believing in first-sight love ; and her earliest studies having taught her that it was impossible for a man to merit one woman's heart who had not previously broken the hearts (though quite unintentionally) of half a score others ; and having never heard even the rumour of such a fatality pursuing Captain Fitz Arthur, had long ago put

him *hors de combat* from the field of rivalry for her favour. She had, besides, so completely settled him as *a fright*, from his picture, and his first appearance under the fangs of a jaundice, that although he became, in the course of five months after his return, quite well, and almost handsome, she persisted in thinking and speaking of him as merely gentleman-like.

To his generous spirit, clear judgment, steady principles, and tenderness of nature (after a while) she did ample justice; yet almost unknown to herself: for though gradual acquaintance with these qualities in him, gave his opinions a weight with her, his approbation a value, and his disapproval an awfulness, which caused her just as much solicitude for his regard as was more than sufficient to secure for herself the stronger exclusive sentiment, of which he soon began to feel the force and the supremacy, unluckily she was revolted by the first character she heard given of

him, before he allowed himself time to mix with the general neighbourhood. In spite of her better sense she was affected by the repetitions of sundry meddling, self-seeking mischief-makers, who went from house to house enumerating the changes made at Arthur's Court by the heir; and representing each as effected against the inward wish of its half-deposed master. So piteous were these lamentations over the worthy Baronet's privations, that for a short time Honoria looked upon Sir Everard as another King Lear, with one monstrous child instead of two. Happy circumstances, however, first weakened, and then triumphed over this cruel calumny.

Honoria had been in the habit of going often to Arthur's Court, ostensibly to visit Mrs. Fothergill, but in reality to delight Sir Everard and his invalid son with her cheerfulness. She ceased to do this so frequently when once a formidable Captain of Dragoons was added to the small party. Yet dinner invitations

were given to, and accepted by, Mr. and Mrs. Meredith, and their niece, of course, accompanied them.

There, while Sir Everard was discussing politics of church or county with Mr. Meredith, and the latter's guarded better half was enacting the civil and soft-speaking to the rarely-speaking Mrs. Fothergill, Honoria would sit by the invalid Hylton, devoting herself to entertain, to help, to listen to him ; while Captain Fitz Arthur, dividing his obvious attentions equally amongst all, was unconsciously marking his thought's incessant occupation about one alone, by always fancying Miss O'Hara spoke, or Miss O'Hara was spoken of, or Miss O'Hara was needing something, whenever any thing was said, or referred to, or required by another.

In one of those corner conversations with Hylton, Honoria heard, with pleased surprize, though as a profound secret, that one of Captain Fitz Arthur's first acts on his return, had been to procure the advice of a medical man, celebrated for

his knowledge of such complaints as had followed Hylton's early accident; and that in consequence of his advice, the patient boy was already sensible of a material improvement in his general health.

“ I know it must have cost dear Delaval a great deal of money,” whispered Hylton, “ for Dr. C—— was obliged to come from Edinburgh to see me; and though he staid only six hours, there was all the expences of his travelling, and his great, great fee beside. You know he must have lost so many smaller fees, that Delaval must have given him fifty, or perhaps a hundred guineas to make it up: he only joked when I asked him what he gave, and said I had no business to enquire what he paid for the present he chose to make me on my birth-day, for it was my birth-day; so he put one of the prescriptions into my hand, and kissed me, and bid God bless me, and ran away. Do you know, Miss O'Hara, I saw he was just as ready to cry as I was.”

“ Well, it was very good, and very right, and what he ought to do !” Honoria observed, pleased, without astonishment, “ every good brother would have done the same ; don’t actually deify yours, my sweet Hylly.” “ Oh, but there is no brother half so good and kind as mine,” resumed her young companion. “ Delaval is so noble upon proper occasions ! He’ll give his last farthing to any one in want, though he won’t allow anybody to waste money, or to cheat him and papa. For a person he loves, I do believe he’d sell himself to do them good.”

The emotion with which the grateful boy spoke, prevented his proceeding with more proofs of his elder brother’s true liberality ; but Honoria had heard enough to convince her that Captain Fitz Arthur deserved a very different character from what current report gave him just then : and Mrs. Preston’s warm commendations upon every part of his conduct, completed her conviction of his worth.

In his boyish days, Captain Fitz Arthur

had been one of the happiest of the juvenile set who used to play blind-man's-buff, and eat mince-pies at Hazeldean; he loved Mrs. Preston when he was a boy for he knew not what; now, that he had traversed half the world, he could give ample reasons for his continued affection towards this amiable woman.

It was that simplicity without simple-ness; that admiration of excellence without envy or discontent; that freshness of every benevolent opinion, and that unwearied practice of every friendly office, which, at sixty, proclaimed the heart to be still sixteen. It was this happy nature, which being originally placed in the situation best fitted for its growth, and sheltered afterwards by a gracious Providence from every event which might either shake or sully it, was green and gladsome to the sight, bounteous of good to the soul. Such a character, seemingly of humble claims to notice, was rare, however; and could not be appreciated until a person had made a much longer

tour amongst their fellow creatures than any one at Edenfell had done, Captain Fitz Arthur excepted.

Immediately after his return, Captain Fitz Arthur found his way almost daily to Hazeldean ; where he used to have pleasure in talking over old times with Mrs. Preston, telling her little histories of India and military life, and acquiring from her rational remarks, or kindly confidences, the means of serving her or others.

There of course he met our heroine not unfrequently, (for she was always Mrs. Preston's guest when her daughters were absent together,) and he was as ready as herself to stroll with the notable mistress of the little mansion, to her outfields and farm, or to read aloud while she and Honoria worked. There was another haunt, too, of Miss O'Hara's, where he delicately took care not to meet her, but where he often followed her steps.

It was to a decent little room in Edenfell, inhabited by a bed-ridden old woman

who had been the village school-mistress for thirty years, and many a promising scion, and stately tree, had grown and flourished under the salutary shade of her primeval birch.

Hedworth and Delaval Fitz Arthur had been her scholars when in petticoats. Delaval remembered the childish eagerness with which he had ever mounted the servant's back appointed to carry him to and fro for Dame Wilson's instructions, and the many sugar plums her sovereign hand had bestowed upon his diligent scholarship. Reverentially conscious of owing his knowledge of the first six letters of the alphabet to her solemn admixture of sternness and graciousness, he deemed attention to her helpless, purblind old age, an absolute duty.

Fitz Arthur had a melancholy pleasure, also, in talking with her of his brother, whom he never mentioned before Sir Everard. Dame Wilson loved poor Hedworth's memory, (he had been her favourite by favour of a face like a peach,) and it eased her heart to be thus privi-

leged in telling over the stories of his childhood, to one who had shared the petty pains and perils of this darling pupil.

At these times a tear often stole silently down Fitz Arthur's cheek while the sweet endearments of the period Dame Wilson was describing, and the more joyous companionship of boyhood, came over him in a flood of remembrances. When his heart was thus softened he would listen with peculiar delight to the praises of Miss O'Hara, incidentally spread through the poor spinster's narrative; and he often returned home, musing less upon the buried brother, than upon the pious hand which he was told had long taken care to keep weeds from growing round the tomb which covered the remains of Dame Wilson's favourite scholar.

In his various ramblings amongst rich and poor, Fitz Arthur could not but observe that no one was so generally beloved as Miss O'Hara; every body had their own name of endearment for her: with his father who loved the innocent

excitement of flowers, she was "his nosegay," with her uncle "my kitten," with Dame Wilson "that lamb," with Hetty Macready her "jewel," with all the cotters "the good, dear, young lady." Such epithets speak volumes!

Honoraria, indeed, could be amiable in so many ways, that there was scarcely a person existing, however oddly constructed, whom her widely-ranging character could not find a harmony for. Fitz Arthur saw this immediately, and found in his turn, her note of unison with him.

This he found in the uncommon openness, without indiscretion, of her character and conversation. Such frankness is rare in women, who are generally either timidly reserved, or impetuously unguarded: it argues a loyal heart, and a strong mind; and is, therefore, to be received as the herald of a spirit capable of being moved to noble purposes.

Fitzarthur, though he did not much frequent the rectory, from that *tact* which made him feel that Honoraria was never

her happy self in Mrs. Meredith's company, sought her everywhere else with evident avidity; gradually giving her so much of his noiseless attention, and being so continually at the command of all her wishes, that Honoria felt, without reflecting on it, nay, before she was aware, that her power over him in every way was absolute.

Yet, with all this, Honoria remained cruelly indifferent to Captain Fitz Arthur. Given up to a prejudiced imagination, and always, therefore, in pursuit of something better than what she saw daily, she was naturally attracted to every unknown person. In each new acquaintance, whether to be made at a country ball or a private pleasure party, she hoped to find that *rara avis* of her studies and her dreams, a perfect character in a perfect form: but, as this perfect character united qualities which never have been united in mere mortal, she pursued it in vain.

Judging by the bias of her own heart, Honoria thought those virtues the easiest

to practise, which are in truth the hardest; those the commonest, which are in truth the rarest. Thus when she heard her uncle mention instances of peculiar tenderness to the wayfarer, the aged, the penitent outcast, which he discovered to have proceeded from Delaval Fitz Arthur; when she was shown some striking proof of his generous sacrifice for the sake of his half-brothers; when she saw him yielding up his own refined and studious habits with unabating cheerfulness to accommodate himself to the less improving and more jovial ones of his father; when she witnessed the serene kindliness with which he bore the mixed insolence and mischief of his youngest brother during his long holidays—all seemed to her but matters of course; and some fantastic sort of excellence which she would have found it difficult to have described, still flitted before her fancy, forming the desideratum of her expectations.

Honorina was yet ignorant of the world, and had to learn from stern experience

how little of their first brightness, even characters the most carefully moulded by pious hands, retain after mingling with that world. She had yet to learn that in the breast of a truly good Christian lies the well-spring of every heroic action, every sublime sacrifice; that the value of our virtuous deeds depends not on the size of the theatre upon which they are acted, nor on the number of spectators by whom they are applauded; not, even, upon the occasions by which they are called forth.

It may cost one man as much to give up the prospect of domestic happiness, as it would do another to resign a kingdom: yet no one perhaps knows of the one, and the whole world rings with acclaim of the other. At the period of Delaval Fitz Arthur's first acquaintance with Miss O'Hara, she was barely seventeen; and she appeared to him then as full of fascination and fault, sense and silliness, as most young ladies of that age, who have been principally left to chance for the formation of their ideas upon life

and character. But he soon discerned that the laughing girl had some admirable qualities to balance her defects ; a certain high-mindedness and sturdiness of principle accompanied her pliant sociability and fond attachments : she had, moreover, a mine of sterling good sense, (imperfectly worked, indeed, because lying deeper than ordinary observers look for,) but it was a mine, and a rich one.

He often observed, that Miss O'Hara reflected more, and more to the purpose, in five minutes, than many folks of sager reputations would have done in five hours. The beautiful nonsense she sometimes talked before him of ineffaceable impressions, faultless excellence, twin souls, cold calculations, sordid care of self, &c. &c. made him smile at its absurdity ; sometimes gently condemn her for misapplying terms ; oftener sigh at his own weakness in admiring the looks, voice, and enthusiasm of the mistaken reasoner.

He was, however, not without the gratification of hearing, now and then,

through Mrs. Preston, of good effects produced by some casual remark of his, or by some observation of Honoria's own quickly-applying mind, upon actions of his performing. The general tone of his conversation had induced her to extend her circle of books ; she read more, and better works : his example, too, made her ashamed of running about and enjoying herself out of the Parsonage, while her indulgent uncle remained within it, a prey to solitude, — or to his wife.

Fitz Arthur, therefore, met her less frequently than formerly, in her tree-bower, or on the hills ; but he heard of her reading with, and writing for, her uncle ; and he oftener met her beguiling Mr. Meredith from his long cheerless rambles, into pleasanter walks with herself, conducting to the resting-place of some favourite neighbour's house.

These were lovely proofs of a lovely temper ; a heart so open to conviction, so prompt in acting upon that conviction, was surely rare ! The gem was not the less valuable, because some of its native earth

yet clung to it. All that rubbish of false notions, extravagant sentiments, and national pride, which a neglected education had left to accumulate over, and keep down, her own natural sense, he thought might easily be cleared away by an affectionate hand, if that hand were loved and privileged. And at first, wishing only that he were her relation, and then trying to establish himself her friend, he watched, and hinted, and instructed, till he loved her dearer than his life.

At this point Fitz Arthur started, paused, and looked round him. His father's imprudent liberalities and credulous kindness had burthened the family estate with annuities and mortgages, which it would require some years of rigid economy to get rid of: besides which, the settlements made upon Sir Everard's first wife and her children, tying him up from providing sufficiently for a second family, his heir believed himself bound in conscience to give both his young brothers fortunes, when it should please Heaven to deprive them of their only parent.

Meanwhile the education of both, and the suffering health of the elder, would require large sums annually.

Fitz Arthur had given up every thing of his own, independent of his pay, to preserve the old mansion still for the family, in something of its ancient dignity ; yet, even so, there was some secret drain for ready money, which he durst not, would not enquire into, but which caused him many an uneasy hour ; and made him fear that his poor father's self-incurred misfortunes were not all over. Miss O'Hara, he well knew, had not two thousand pounds in the world !

Shocking as it must appear to all lovers under twenty, Captain Fitz Arthur, after pondering on these facts, till he was near relapsing into the sallow invalid again, at length came to the magnanimous resolution of thinking no more of Miss O'Hara as a wife. It is needless to say how manfully he maintained this resolution — *every now and then* — when certain indications of utter unobservance of his feelings, in the charming Honoria,

or of her eager interest in some new-comer, reminded him that she had not yet seen the man with whom she desired to pass her life. The next day, perhaps, a certain bright humidness in Miss O'Hara's eyes, when they met, and she remarked he looked ill, or an accent of tender concern while she feared he was fretting about his poor brother Hylton, made passion rush on him again, like an armed man ; — feelingly convincing poor Delaval, that

“ He who would stay the sea with sand,
Or fetter flame with flaxen band,
Hath yet a harder task to prove,
By strong resolve to conquer love.”

In the main, however, Captain Fitz Arthur kept his engagement with himself ; and if he were one day too tender he was the next too stiff. Honoria rallied him on such ague-like friendship, as she called his, with its hot and cold fits ; and blest Heaven for having given her a heart that always kept itself warm, and was ready for a friend to warm their hands at, whenever they chose.

At such moments the lover was on the point of convincing her how ill he deserved her gay reproach ; but happily, Honoria's little jest uttered, she glided, or bounded away, as the humour of the moment prompted.

CHAP. III.

SIR Everard Fitz Arthur had been accustomed to keep his own birthday ever since he could remember one; and its sixtieth anniversary happening ten months after his son Delaval's return, he proposed commemorating both events, by a dinner in honour of the one, and a ball for the other.

Captain Fitz Arthur's system of economy did not exclude a moderate extra expenditure upon particular occasions: his father's birthday was one of these. Sir Everard's proposal was cordially assented to. Preparations for a dinner and a dance were immediately commenced, in their old fashion of profuse hospitality for poor and rich; heightened in elegance, and I fear it must be owned in expence, by the suggestions of our travelled soldier's improved taste.

Here, perhaps, Captain Fitz Arthur

may be blamed, as departing from his character and foregone purpose. But Fitz Arthur is not described as perfect : he had his weaknesses like other men. It is true, he was never to be awed from right conduct by fear, nor won to give up a principle from flattery : but no one could so little resist the pleadings of affection or of pity in his own breast : and what a beloved person appeared to wish, provided it was not actually criminal, he could not help striving to obtain for them, though at some risk of hereafter inconveniencing themselves, as well as of materially injuring his own comforts.

This indulgent nature he inherited from the Fitz Arthur blood : from his mother's he derived that sound judgment and unbending rectitude, which kept this yielding inclination from stooping too low.

The first Lady Fitz Arthur was a portionless daughter of one of the best houses in Scotland. She came to Arthur's Court with the noble spirit of high blood, coupled to the self-denying habits

of honourable poverty : and she bequeathed to her children Scottish sense, Scottish principle, and Scottish "attachment to kith and kind."

The second son was too young when she died to have profited much by her example ; but he remembered the maternal sweetness which had beautified the inflexibility of her will ; and her memory equally beloved and revered by all their dependants, influenced him in after life, with beneficial effect.

No sooner were the Baronet's cards of invitation sent out, than Mrs. Shafto manœuvred to get herself solicited to become Lady Patroness : with the double view of showing her consequence, and excluding the vulgar herd. Unluckily, there was an efficient mistress at Arthur's Court, in the person of Mrs. Fothergill ; and the ladies of Shafto Place were therefore reduced to the humbler characters of guests.

The dinner, though at a table running the whole length of the state dining-room, (as the larger eating-hall was still called,)

was said to be given only to Sir Everard's most intimate and nearest neighbours. What was then the horror of Mrs. and the Misses Shafto to behold "stupid Mr. Meredith," "vulgar Mrs. Meredith," and "the impertinent Miss O'Hara," seated at the same board with themselves.

Mrs. Shafto had with much difficulty made up her mind to the mortification of seeing them amongst the mixed company, whom every one expected would come from the four quarters of the county to dance, and then lay waste a standing supper. But to be planted beside these *nobodies*, rooted at an everlasting dinner, to be obliged to *act the civil*, and *make the agreeable*, to such people! — this was almost beyond even the power of religion. Of religion, however, Mrs. Shafto had exactly so much as enabled her to whisper with great suavity and unction to her more rebellious daughters, that Mr. Meredith was in the church, and she feared it might be wrong not to endeavour, it might be proper, perhaps, to take Christian "notice of his wife and

niece." The young ladies pouted and sat down.

Miss O'Hara was unfortunately seated directly opposite to Mrs. Shafto, with a tall, stooping, *handsomish* dragoon officer on her right, and a sturdy old squire (cut after the pattern of his own clipped hollies) on her left : just far enough removed from Captain Fitz Arthur, to keep all his senses uneasily upon the stretch, to see what Miss O'Hara was doing, to hear what she was saying, to guess what she was wanting ; to fear, in short, that she was too much pleased with one of her next neighbours at least.

It may be supposed that poor Captain Fitz Arthur failed in doing the honours of his father's table. He was frequently absent ; gave wrong answers to various challenges for drinking wine ; forgot to drink the wine when it was poured out ; and twice sent a plate of roast beef to Major Stanhope, after the gallant officer had declared himself engaged in an unsuccessful assault upon a portion already sent from the same bountiful hand.

Many happy applications of military terms, and as many ludicrous comparisons of his heaped plate to a besieged town, were made by the young officer, and made with a careless good-humour which disarmed criticism. He was prettily endowed with that talent of saying lively nothings, so often accepted for genuine humour, when good spirits, good looks, and above all, a handsome uniform sets it off. The Major, therefore, followed up his pleasantry, by assuring Miss O'Hara in an audible whisper, that Fitz Arthur certainly meant to stock him for a siege; adding such a string of amusing absurdities about the sort of beleaguement he had to dread, and the forces that were likely to sit down before him, that Honoria's brilliant dark eyes laughed through their glittering fringes, till they blinded themselves and others.

Captain Fitz Arthur witnessed this mirth; he had caught the whisper; there was nothing offensive either in the meaning, or the manner of it: nothing could be more harmless or natural than the

mirth of both ; yet he burnt all over with a mingled sensation of resentment and confusion.

The feeling causing this sensation was momentary ; it was but the infirmity of jealous love, fearfully apprehensive of being ridiculous in the eyes of her whom he wished to inspire with far different sentiments ; and such a heart as Delaval Fitz Arthur's threw it off with instant self-reproach.

This little incident did him the service of restoring him to himself : he saw the necessity of watching his own conduct rather than that of others, (our best way, indeed, through life itself,) and suddenly rousing, he began a gay and graceful attack upon the Major, which produced infinite amusement to all within hearing.

The impulse of hilarity given by him who did the principal honours of the feast, gaiety became the order of the day. Gentlemen who could not say brilliant things, paid compliments ; ladies who could not answer with a prettiness or a pleasantry, could smile, bow, laugh, blush,

&c. Thus the whole company did more than eat.

A gay clamour at table is particularly favourable to flirtations : young ladies previously held in awe by the consciousness of having some envious eves-dropper at their elbow, then venture to return a compliment, or drop an encouraging question ; and it is therefore at such moments wary chaperons are especially upon the alert.

Mrs. Shafto's mode of chaperoning was capital : she watched, — not her own daughters, but those of other people ; by which means she acquired a knowledge of all the schemes carrying on in the county amongst the young ladies ; she found out what plans in her own family were likely to succeed or prove abortive. On the present occasion, Mrs. Shafto affecting to be most politely engaged in breathing insipid civilities in a studied voice into the ear of a venerable church dignitary, who heard the tones without attending to the words, was keenly observing her opposite neighbour : amaz-

ing herself at the ease, the playfulness, the infantine light-heartedness of Honoria, coupled with what she termed a *retenuë* of manner that was absolutely provoking.

Mrs. Shafto could not help observing, that Miss O'Hara seemed to know the exact moment, when it was time to check a vivacity in herself, which might lead to the appearance of too sudden an intimacy with a stranger of the opposite sex. At the first familiar tone of Major Stanhope, before his spirits could run him into a single careless expression, Honoria changed her look ; and with a transition, quick and irresistible as lightning, turned the sportive skirmishing of her wit and the Major's, into quiet though interesting remarks upon the admirable paintings which surrounded the dining-hall.

This change was effected with such resolute steadiness and bravery, though her heightened colour, and something of embarrassment in her eyes told that it cost something to her modest youth, to resist her companion's efforts at bringing back their former sportive tone, that even Mrs.

Shafto could not help thinking, at first, that it was dignified. Delaval Fitz Arthur, who observed it too, felt it delightful.

Upon second thoughts, neither of these observers were quite as much gratified. Mrs. Shafto finally settled, that this maidenly delicacy was a piece of acting in Miss O'Hara, who had evidently a great deal more in her than most people suspected; that she was a thorough-paced, designing, artful girl, ready to take in the first young man of good connections that came in her way; that she was awfully handsome, and as such, like "the beastly Corsican fiend," "to-be-never-a-bit-the-less-on-that-account-universally-detested-and-avoided." Captain Fitz Arthur despondingly admitted to himself, that there was more danger in seriousness and sentiment with a pleasing companion, than in common rattling, or even in dazzling wit; and every time he looked at Major Stanhope, the more formidably good-looking he thought him. Major Stanhope, in short, became the stationary object of his thoughts during the greatest part of this

memorable evening ; so that he was perpetually calling upon the officer for assistance in his various duties at table, and in the entertaining-rooms.

“ I wish to my soul you would find another aid-de-camp !” half whispered the half-enamoured Major, half-angrily, when he started up, for the fifth time, at a summons from Captain Fitz Arthur. “ This confounded sixteenth call of yours has lost me my standing-place beside Miss O'Hara, — by and by I must get you to tell me who she is.”

“ May I do myself the pleasure of becoming your informant ?” asked the courteous Mrs. Shafto, with an apologizing look for having listened, and such a flattering air of interest, that although the young soldier reddened till face and coat were of one colour, he stammered out something between a sillyish laugh and a “ thank you !” taking the seat she winningly made for him on the sofa.

Major Stanhope, I must apprise my readers, was known to Mrs. Shafto as the younger son of a new lord with an old

estate. He was nearly related to the first military character of that period; and Major Stanhope, therefore, with such advantages, was not unworthy the notice of any commoner's daughter. A how-d'-you-do acquaintance in London privileged Mrs. Shafto in the country in doing the honours of her neighbourhood; and she hastened now to enter upon her office.

“It is so very agreeable,” the lady resumed, “to find one's own opinion the opinion of another, especially if we are inclined to like the person, that I really could not help stealing in thus upon your conversation about that very pretty girl. I admire herself so much, and so much compassionate her misfortune in being connected as she is. No wonder you asked who she is, since she has *l'air du monde* at an age when other girls are blushing and hiding behind their mammas. How she has acquired this wonderful self-possession nobody can imagine; it must have been born with her, as we hear it is in people upon the stage;

for she is actually niece to that little over-dressed, vulgar, fussy woman, drinking such quantities of negus."

"And who is that little woman?" awkwardly asked Major Stanhope, designedly dropping every epithet except the harmless one.

"Our village clergyman's wife," was the reply, "a farmer's daughter. The pretty girl is an orphan, wholly dependent upon these people. Her father was some Irish ensign or lieutenant in a marching regiment. The foot, I believe, Major Stanhope —"

"Are often much better soldiers than we cavalry fellows!" exclaimed Stanhope, with genuine sincerity, and an honest simplicity, which showed that he was not at all conscious of the lady's meaning.

"Is it so?" was the lady's rejoinder, uttered with the air of being pleased at the removal of her own prejudice. "I am really obliged to you for setting me right. I shall respect infantry officers from this moment; but what must I

think of the person whose candour did them justice, and waived the admitted superiority of his own line of service?"

Stanhope's sillyish laugh helped him out again: it always stood his friend when his modesty was overpowered; and like many injudicious friends, did him more harm than good. He had nothing silly-seeming about him, except this laugh: though after its first short burst, Mrs. Shafto set him down for a good-natured foolish young man, exactly suited for one of her Shades; and she destined him instantly for whichever of the three she might, after a little reflection, deem best fitted to help off the others.

"Major Stanhope must excuse me, if I take the privilege of a certain age," resumed Mrs. Shafto insinuatingly, "and frankly tell him, I *must* bring him and Mr. Shafto acquainted. I am old-fashioned enough to be pleased with something more in a young man than a fine person and an elegant address. (Mrs. Shafto's flattery-trowel was now elevated with no shrinking hand: poor Stanhope

caught up a half-made bow, with one of his laughs.) "Your liberal sentiments are very rare. I suspect there is a little romance too, under that very becoming uniform. Romance is only too engaging in a young man." (The trowel was laid on unsparingly, and the laugh increased.) "I shall never hear from you, I am sure, those shocking questions about a young lady's family, fortune, and connections, which are so right in papas and mammas, and so unnatural in sons and daughters. I am so interested in this pretty Miss O'Hara, and so anxious to see her taken out of the VERY under set she lives in, that I fear, I almost wish to talk some unexceptionable man into doing a foolish thing. You won't wonder at *my* foolish zeal, perhaps, when I tell you, they talk of marrying her to a son of Mr. Shafto's steward. It will be dreadfully awkward, after having met her in society here! But luckily one has seen her no where else; except at their own parsonage."

"A steward's son!" repeated Major

Stanhope, all scarlet again: even more scarlet than his coat. It must be confessed there was less of love than of alarmed pride in the suffusion. Miss O'Hara was well nigh done for.

"They do, indeed, say so!" Mrs. Shafto added, with a most prepossessing sigh. "Every body must wish to prevent such a sacrifice, she is so pretty! yet otherwise young Chaplin would be a very suitable match for her; exactly in her own line. I am looking about for Mr. Shafto, that I may have the gratification of making you and him acquainted. You must allow me to present Mr. Shafto. He will find ways and means, I hope, of bringing you again into Miss O'Hara's company."

"Me! O, positively not on Miss O'Hara's account. I just asked about her, because I sat next her at dinner, and we got on together famously: but I —, really I —." The confused Major stammered these disjointed sentences with the sensation of being wasp-stung. Mrs. Shafto smiled benignly; and by way of

relieving his distress, as she had done his heart of all inclination to fall in love with Honoria, called his attention to a beautiful young woman in white satin, who was visible through the folding doors, as she approached them from the outer room.

“What a very fine young woman!” exclaimed Mrs. Shafto. “She is with Lady Henderson I see: what an *air distingué*! how feminine that downcast look! how very lady-like that almost pale complexion! certainly exuberant health and spirits is a *little* vulgar! my dark beauty must keep out of her way, if she means to retain her conquests. I protest that young lady seems as if she were made of alabaster! every body looks quite black beside her! does she please you, Major Stanhope?”

The Major was fair and blue-eyed himself, so of course he admired exactly the reverse; but he could not refuse a deserved tribute of admiration to the delicate loveliness of her he was called upon to admire.

“ I felt sure you would be taken with that look of high-breeding,” resumed Mrs. Shafto. “ Lord Chesterfield used to say (by the way, I dare say I am talking with one of that immortal Peer’s race?) that blood was worth all the beauty in the world. I certainly agree with him : that is, in thinking no beauty of skin or feature can make up for the want of an air of birth and fashion. O, here is Mr. Shafto.”

Stanhope started up. “ I —, I — shall be very happy to make Mr. Shafto’s acquaintance ; but, indeed, positively —”

“ My dear Sir,” soothingly exclaimed his wily companion, laying her hand upon his arm ; “ pray don’t give a serious turn to my nonsense of the moment. I want to present you and Mr. Shafto to each other, because I am trying to amass a little treasure of safe and improving acquaintance for my son when he goes into the world.” Mrs. Shafto’s eldest son was a boy of fifteen at Eton !

Major Stanhope was in the toils : he stammered forth again some awkward

compliment not half intelligible ; and Mr. Shafto was called up. The Major was introduced. It was discovered that he was one of a shooting party at Lord ——'s, nine miles off, and that he meant to drive back in his tandem.

Mr. Shafto dexterously obeying certain well-understood signals of his lady's eyes and fan, plied him so hard with polite entreaties, that he consented to drive his servant and his tandem three miles instead of nine ; sleep at Shafto Place ; breakfast there ; dawdle away a forenoon there, seeing grounds and being shown prospects which he foresaw would weary him to stupefaction, having no interest in his companions.

Even after this arrangement was made, Mrs. Shafto did not let her prey escape ; for she was anxious to keep him disengaged as a partner, until one of her daughters should have left the dance, and come to see what her mamma had been catering for her. She now turned the conversation upon field sports. Stanhope flew at the quarry ; and quickly found

himself delivering a most able lecture upon how to raise, and how to bring down birds, &c. to an extremely fine lady, who was listening to it with the reverential attention of a disciple.

It was now Captain Fitz Arthur's turn to laugh; but he smiled only, as passing to the dance with Miss O'Hara, he caught part of Stanhope's ardent harangue. "How merciless you are to the poor moor-fowl, Major Stanhope," Honoria could not forbear exclaiming, as she gaily curtsied by him; "trying to inspire even our pitying sex with ambition to maim and slay." "I don't remember ever to have met you with dogs and a gun," she observed to her partner, without waiting for the Major's defence.

Fitz Arthur's heart throbbed at the complimentary tone of this question, till it was felt against the soft arm which rested on his; he did not trust himself to answer at the moment; but shortly afterwards said, in a voice of ill-disguised emotion, "I must not steal your good opinion; I was formerly far too fond of

every exercise: I thought only of the exercise, and the exhilaration; but I once saw a sight, and heard a cry —” He stopt, not knowing how to tell, nor whether he should tell the rest.

Honoria's earnest eyes were bent on him, the ready tear was already waiting. “I cannot tell you!” he continued. “It is enough that I have never since been able to go coursing;” and he turned from her, ashamed of the moisture rising to his own eyes.

The fact which Captain Fitz Arthur could not bring himself to narrate, was, simply, that a poor hare, of which he had been one of the pursuers, would have given birth to young, perhaps in a few hours, had not a cruel death prevented her; and it was these additional deaths of unborn creatures which fixed the pang inflicted by that well-remembered cry.

Perhaps Miss O'Hara, with her usual quickness, divined this fact, for she hastily bent down her head, and the next

moment Fitz Arthur saw a large drop or two standing among the leaves of some geraniums in her bosom.

Never did lover more eagerly covet his mistress's bouquet, than did our poor unheeded one this very simple nosegay ; the tears upon it were, in his eyes, worth all the diamonds of earth or sky.

Miss O'Hara, however, danced as gaily afterwards, as though no sad feeling had crossed her. It was the first time she had ever been Captain Fitz Arthur's partner, and he kept such perfect time with his few careless steps, his fine figure looked to such advantage amongst a great proportion of men too tall, too short, too fat, or too thin, and the expression of his shaded eyes was so much softer and sweeter than usual, that she *almost* remarked it.

At the instant of completing their share of the figure with the last couple in the dance, Captain Fitz Arthur begged his partner's pardon for a moment, while he went to speak to a young lady just observed by him, in company with her

chaperon. When he rejoined Honoria, she asked him the name of his very lovely friend? for she was struck with the modest and pensive loveliness of those downcast blue eyes, and that transparent fairness which Mrs. Shafto had lately been contrasting with her own darkness and brilliancy. "That was Miss Clavering," he replied. "I was her father's aid-de-camp when he commanded at Calcutta; and I had, therefore, frequent opportunities of being in her company. In truth, I was so domesticated with her during the first five years of my exile, and she was such a child when we were first acquainted, that but now I forgot myself, and called her Agnes. She is just out of mourning for her father, and I am sure comes even to our moderate dance with few spirits for it."

"Is she as sweet a creature as she looks?" asked Honoria, following with her eyes the slow and graceful progress of Miss Clavering's truly feminine form as she advanced up the room.

"Indeed, indeed, she is!" returned

Fitz Arthur earnestly, "I only wish she may be happier than I fear —"

"I suppose I must not ask *why* you fear she is not happy?" said Honoria with a pleading tone; "her story belongs only to friends, of course."

"It has been too well known amongst a certain set of people," replied Fitz Arthur, "to be called a secret; I would still refrain from discussing it generally; but to you, Miss O'Hara! I will tell it you when we sit down between the dances, for I hope some day to make you and her known to each other."

The attention of both speaker and listener was now called to their duty as dancers, which each attended to with a creditable fidelity. As they approached the vicinity of Mrs. Shafto and Major Stanhope they were amused, in spite of softer thoughts, by catching, at intervals, snatches of their prolonged conversation.

Honoria was accustomed to amuse her uncle, after any little party, with the narration of whatever had occurred there of the comic or the interesting;

and as in all parties and battles, no one individual can be every where, each may have something new to tell his companion when he quits the scene of action. Thus, on the present occasion, Honoria was treasuring up traits of the ridiculous for harmless pleasantry in private: the following sentences particularly entertained her. Major Stanhope was drilling Mrs. Shafto in hunting.

“ You should never ride more forward than the tail of the pack ; a few yards or so wide of the tail, is the thing : for it must be a shocking bad pack, indeed, if you can't see the front hound from the tail of it ; and if your scent's bad, and you cross it (which you are likely to do by riding too forward,) its all up with you. Nothing is so provoking too as a fellow's capping hounds when the scent's cold ! it just plays the deuce with them — making them run all eager and abroad like so many geese.”

“ Doubtless, vastly vexatious to a practised sportsman,” observed Mrs. Shafto complacently.

“ Then the vexation of a stupid block-head, bullying your best young hound when he is cast, and trying all he can to get in ! Such a fellow merits mobbing, more than any skirter in the pack ; they’re always doing mischief : if one of the hounds happens to go off with a bad scent, these sort of fellows halloo and clatter on with such a noise that the hound lifts, and you have a new scent to seek ; then they regularly interfere at a check : — the most unhandsome, ungentlemanlike thing possible.”

“ Surely that is a reason why all except gentlemen ought to be excluded from a hunt,” observed the very aristocratic Mrs. Shafto.

“ Why, so I think,” returned the liberal, English-hearted Stanhope, “ if you mean gentlemen by spirit and manners ; let me find these, and I tell you fairly, I don’t much care, on my own account, whether the man I hunt with be a peer or a pastry-cook. I might be sorry on his, because he would lose so

much time from making his pies, and earning his bread."

Honoriam lost Mrs. Shafto's answer in the din and intricacy of the dance; but Captain Fitz Arthur smilingly whispered as they changed sides, "That was said ludicrously by Stanhope, but its meaning was excellent. — Don't you think so?" Honoriam's beaming look answered him.

When the set was over, Fitz Arthur led his partner to a seat, and there began the little history he had promised.

"I think it is about four years and a half since Miss Clavering, then not seventeen, left India with her mother, to join three sisters who had been previously sent to England for education. Our first news of her was, that she was going to be married to a young man of family and splendid endowments, though small fortune: that is, that Mrs. Clavering waited only for the General's sanction to the marriage. When the news came, the General was just embarking for England, whither he went, in the fond hope of

establishing the happiness of a beloved child, and of passing the remainder of his days in the bosom of peace and affection. But circumstances had changed meanwhile; and ere he was two months on shore he broke off the match." "Oh, cruel!" exclaimed Honoria, inconsiderately, "if they were greatly attached!"

"No, it was not cruel," resumed Fitz Arthur, with apprehensive tenderness: "I fear it was kind — right! The lover, though exceedingly in love, and highly gifted, and possessed of many fine qualities, was, report said, addicted to high play; and certainly gave tokens of a despotic, and of a very unreasonable temper. The General would not trust a darling child's happiness in such hands; and Miss Clavering was too dutiful and noble-minded to resist an authority exerted upon just grounds."

"She was to have a large fortune, I dare say," exclaimed Honoria, somewhat indignantly; "and your General was ambitious for his lovely daughter."

“ I shall appease you, I hope, by answering no ! ” returned Fitz Arthur, with a gentle smile. “ When Miss Clavering engaged herself to her lover, the General had honourably realised a noble fortune, and she would have been portioned accordingly ; but the failure of a house in which this fortune was temporarily placed for investment in England, reduced the family to actual beggary ; while the increased wealth and honours of her lover’s family, by the death of an unmarried uncle, widened the distance between their new situations.

“ These circumstances, together with fears of the young man’s steadiness, (for he had hastily abandoned an honourable career in life for the vision of retirement with the woman he loved,) made the General decide upon terminating an engagement entered into when the parties were of equal prospects. Soon after which my old friend breathed his last sigh, amidst doubts and anxiety for those he left behind. Mrs. Clavering and her four

daughters were then limited to the pension allowed her as his widow : — so that when Mrs. Letitia Branspeth, the General's cousin, declared her resolution of making Miss Clavering her heiress, in consequence of that young lady's dutiful and judicious conduct, (as she styled it,) a new fetter was put upon poor Agnes Clavering's inclination. Mrs. Branspeth had early credited the reports against her young relation's lover, and her favour was to be secured only by adherence to the system of discarding him."

"This, then, is the young lady I have heard so much envied for her good fortune! — Poor girl, I pity her!" was Honoria's energetic exclamation. "For having six thousand a-year in perspective?" "No, not for that; — but what has money to do with happiness?"

Captain Fitz Arthur did not reply to this every-day question of the inexperienced: at that moment he could have answered, "Every thing;" — but he was silent.

“ And does she come from Aycliffe Castle to a ball, after all this ? ” asked Honoria, somewhat censuringly ; “ is it not twenty miles from this ? ”

“ I believe it is,” was the reply : “ But Mrs. Letitia is only come into the country to look at some extensive alterations going on at Aycliffe. She and two of the Misses Clavering are staying at Lady Henderson’s ; whence they will return to Bath, where Mrs. Letitia has been living these last three years, on account of a rheumatic complaint. I suspect my father is solely indebted to the old lady’s great regard for him, for Agnes’s company. The poor girl carries the look of a victim with her into gay society.”

“ And may I ask something about the person she was to have married ! — Has he proved worthy or unworthy ? ”

“ I scarcely know how to answer you,” replied Fitz Arthur, “ for I am unacquainted with his immediate connections ; and the removal of Mrs. Clavering to

Lisbon last autumn, for the health of her youngest girl, deprives me of her confidential communications. I believe, however, that he was not an habitual gamester, and that he was disinterested, though absurdly visionary ; he had some very preposterous notions upon the nature of confidence and affection. I'll give you an instance of it. — He certainly made confession of his first follies to Mrs. Clavering, when soliciting the hand of her daughter, and coupled it with the solemn assurance that he had never touched a card or thrown a dice since then. But when the General questioned him upon a story related to the former by a friend of whose veracity and good intention he had a twenty years' experience, the young man took fire, considered his truth and honour insulted ; and though owning that he could satisfactorily explain every circumstance of the story, proudly insisted upon unconditional trust in his assertion. The General, unhappily, was as choleric as the other showed himself to be arrogant ; and they parted in mutual bitter-

ness. In the same spirit of distempered, exacting unreasonableness, the lover then insisted upon Agnes's sanction to his conduct. She distinctly avowed her firm belief in his truth, but admitted a father's right to challenge sober matter of fact. This justice offended his haughty temper, it wounded his overstrained sensibility, and he abruptly broke with her.

“ Still, however, he loved her sincerely, though thus waywardly ; for I know that immediately on her father's death he renewed his addresses, urging her to marry him, in despite of the rich relation, whose fortune she would forfeit along with her favour.”

“ That was generous, surely !”

“ At first sight it seems so,” was Fitz Arthur's reluctant answer : “ but surely it was selfish when looked into. Mrs. Branspeth is violently his enemy ; and had Miss Clavering persisted in giving him any encouragement, as her mother has always been his advocate, not only Agnes would have forfeited, but the whole family would have lost their ample

support through her means. The lover, generous as he was, could not have provided for so large a family of daughters: his independence was not above fifteen hundred a year; and he had slighted advantageous opportunities of getting forward in public life. Surely, therefore, he was tempting the amiable Agnes to make him happy at the expense of her future peace! hers is not a heart to enjoy domestic happiness — the greatest of all,” (Fitz Arthur smothered a sigh,) “while conscious she had caused the poverty and broken the hopes of three young sisters. Yet she loved this impassioned young man too dearly not to suffer almost mortal anguish from her inward struggles. Should he not have spared her those struggles? — relied on her heart — tried to redeem himself in her friend’s opinion, and waited with patient constancy for the chances of the future?” Honoria turned on him a look of sad conviction. “I fear you are right,” she said. “What a lamentable perversity of judgment in one who you say is so dis-

tinguished otherwise! poor Miss Clavering!" "Yes, I cannot understand such self-indulgence, at the cost of the being, dearest to us on earth," resumed Fitz Arthur, insensibly mixing his own feelings with those of the two persons he was considering. "The sentiment of real and right affection appears to me to be expressed by these lines: —

"O 'tis not pride! — it is not pride
Which makes me thus determined shun thee;
Thou canst not love, and I would hide
The tearful eye and wasted cheek,
The struggling sigh that fain would speak
Reproach, and say thou hast undone me!
I would not pain that heart of thine,
For all the joys that might be mine!"

Fitz Arthur repeated the lines with a raised colour, and something of tremor in his voice: his own heart was not calm enough to let him pursue the subject; and he was not sorry that the calls of merciless dancers broke up their *tête-à-tête*, and replanted them in their places at the foot of the dance.

The second dance gone down, Fitz Arthur led Honoria back to her uncle

(for Mrs. Meredith was at cards), only to see her hand sought and obtained by another; to see her dance again with as much grace and hilarity as she had done with him, and others before him; to hear her laugh, talk, amuse, enchant all within eye or ear-shot of her; and still to observe that she was doing it with the unconscious charm of a child.

Honorina, believing that her veins flowed with as good blood as the best at Arthur's Court, properly estimating the sacred profession of her uncle, whether in a curate's gown or an archbishop's robes,—quite at home where Sir Everard Fitz Arthur was master,—and too early, perhaps, habituated to company, felt as much at her ease at a ball with country gentry as if she had been on the hill-side amongst the sheep. She was radiant with colour, smiles, and the sparkling of those dark eyes and white teeth, which might be seen, as Sir Everard expressed it, from the bottom of a coal-pit. She was simply dressed in fine India muslin; wearing no ornaments except a single row of

small but exquisite pearls belonging to her great-aunt, and a bunch of scarlet geraniums in her bosom. — Beauty dresses itself.

The Misses Shafto, in clinging black lace dresses, with gold borders, spangled fillets, and gaudy armlets high above the elbows of their long lean arms, were strikingly different.

“ Don't those women look as if we were playing at snap-dragon with them ? ” whispered a witling in the room to his companion. The question was not unapt ; for the sister shades, naturally of chalky whiteness, were rendered of a ghastly blue, by a freezing January night, and the scantiness of their clothing. The colour of their eyes, too, seemed discharged by the wringing effect of extreme cold ; so that three more rueful aspects could not well be imagined. However they were the Misses Shafto, and Sir Everard Fitz Arthur's kinswomen, and Delaval had duly danced with each, after performing the same duty to ladies of higher rank.

“*The impertinent Miss O'Hara*” had come very low in their gallant cousin's list; and he would fain have made her come later, that he might have stood by her at supper, (for the ladies were to sit, and the gentlemen stand,) but he denied himself the gratification. He denied it himself, not from cowardly shame of so betraying his affection for a lovely and deserving girl, but from the generous wish of leaving her free to seek, and find, perhaps, in him who should secure this brief privilege, the man destined to please and win her for life.

Poor Fitz Arthur! how imperfectly was he known, how imperfectly was he valued by the heart that, had it been fully aware of his sterling worth, could, and would have given him its warmest affection!

Honorina had seen the heir of Arthur's Court at first through a cloud of prejudices; and a host of false notions continued to keep the cloud from falling. Was the mist ever to disperse? or was it to disperse too late?

She was this evening better pleased than ordinary with Captain Fitz Arthur. He had interested her by his unostentatious sensibility while speaking of Miss Clavering; and she remembered with pleasure his hope, that they might be known to each other hereafter. Still, however, she had seen him dance and talk with others, in perfect composure of heart.

After going down one dance with Mr. Tudor (the tutor of His Grace of ——'s young sons), she seated herself for the short interval between that and its succeeding one.

Except that Mr. Tudor talked too much of the Tiber, and the Coliseum, and the roses of Pæstum, and was rather apt to take offence, he was a tolerably respectable partner, even for a beauty. Mr. Tudor had a genteel figure; a smooth face; wore powder because he thought it right in a tutor so to do (though he was under thirty, and powder was just gone out of fashion); had hands almost as white as the very white linen conspicuous

at his wrists, and above the collar of his well-brushed black coat; spoke in a measured voice; and was withal inclined to take a very fair share in the decent pleasures of life.

“ These happy geraniums ! ” he observed, with a look which he intended should convey a mixture of profound respect and ardent admiration. “ These happy geraniums remind me of the splendid vegetation of Italy, that *Hesperides* of the world ! I remember once going into *villeggiatura* with the Prince of Santa Croce (that was when I had the honour of travelling with the Honourable Mr. Harrington) — (going into *villeggiatura*, I ought to inform you, Miss O'Hara, is the term by which the Italians express the act or custom of removing into the country to enjoy certain seasons of the year) — such of us *villeggianti* (so they designate persons in *villeggiatura*) as were of cultivated tastes, made frequent excursions from the villa of His Highness; and I recollect going with another enthusiast like myself, (pardon my present

fervour in reverting to it, Miss O'Hara,)" *parenthesised* this pedant, with the frigid look of a statue, "to ascertain the site of Horace's Sabine farm. On the banks of the Livenza (the *Digentia* of the poet), we were ravished with the beauty of the flowers. I had seen the roses of *Pæstum* and *Præneste*, but never had I beheld such perfect *color roseus* as in the flowers growing wild there, under that *stillatus æther*; never such *color roseus* except on the cheek of one living beauty." And Mr. Tudor bowed his powdered pate till it almost touched the dust of the ball-room.

"But surely, Mr. Tudor," exclaimed Honoria, "a scholar like you must have found much higher objects of admiration than roses, lovely as roses are?"

"That remark is highly creditable — that question I mean," cried Mr. Tudor, scrupulously correcting himself, — "highly creditable to your fine intellect, madam;" (he spoke in a tone something between pomposity and pathos;) "the *Campagna di Roma* (ancient *La-*

tium) is full of interest to the scholar. He is surrounded by monuments of those great masters of the world; environed, as it were, by fine associations. The shades of Horace, Cicero, Virgil, and Mæcenas meet him at every step; they may almost be termed the *Dii Indigetes* of the

‘Horrentique atrum nemus imminet umbra.’

The line may be thus Anglicised: —

‘The dark grove hanging with terrific shade.’

Miss O'Hara, I am certain a lady of your taste and fine susceptibility to all that is splendid and heroic, must participate in my passion for the ancient Romans.”

“Must I confess,” Honoria said, “that I have read very little about them; and that what I have read, makes me fancy them disagreeably theatrical in most of their splendid actions? so tyrannical too, with the word liberty always in their lips! so cruelly callous to private suffering — so regardless of private comfort.”

Mr. Tudor did not exactly understand her meaning in the last word; he smiled consequentially, yet tempering the majesty of the smile by a most lover-like spread of his ring-embellished hand over his bending breast, he exclaimed, "I beg your pardon, fair lady! — You would not frame such an opinion, could you take a leisure survey of the proofs still extant of their attention to general comfort and private accommodation. What are their *stratas vias*, their *vias silice stratas*? their *vicinales* (cross roads leading from farm to farm)? their *lapide quadrato stratas* (roads uniting symmetrical beauty with utility)? their *basilicæ* and *calcidicæ* (porticoed structures appropriated solely to the use of pleaders and merchants) — (admirably constructed too, so as to afford shade in summer, and warmth in winter)? Then their *stationes* (extensive halls open at all hours of day and night for the reception of houseless poor) — (the Greeks, indeed, had invented something similar, which they called *leschæ*)! their *taberna meritoria* (a sort of Chelsea hospi-

tal for invalid soldiers)! their *thermopolia* (elegant and pleasing places of lounging, similar to our best coffee or club houses) — (these to be sure were not introduced till after the Punic war)! Then, my dear madam, the admirable construction of their houses : — their rooms covered in a manner to admit or exclude the sun's rays, as the season for inhabiting them required ; their *carbasa*, or blinds ; their *valvæ*, or ventilating windows. The felicitous distribution of their villas into three separate divisions : the *urbana*, for the family ; the *rustica*, for the husbandmen ; the *fructuaria*, for the magazine of household plenty and provision. Every noble mansion had its *triclinium*, or summer eating-room, in the centre of a grove or lawn ; its *valetudinarium*, a quarter for the sick. Every species of fowl or quadruped had their distinct dwelling. The comfort of all was attended to. Nay, we even read of a *glirarium*." " Have pity on me Mr. Tudor !" cried Honoria with mock distress ; " I don't know a

word of Latin. — Pray what is a *glirarium* ?”

“ I beg ten thousand pardons !” exclaimed the self-complacent lover, “ a *glirarium* is a dwelling for dormice. Then their fountains, Miss O'Hara ! you should have been in Italy to feel, in all its exquisiteness, the luxury of

‘ Illa cadens raucum per levia murmur
Saxa ciet’

Once more I solicit pardon ! but our miserable language supplies us with none of those ‘ *verba seu epitheta valde ad descriptionem accommodata* ’ which the classical scholar always uses in thought.”

“ O, if you regularly think in a dead language, Mr. Tudor, you are awful ! I dare not stay a moment longer near you.” And with the rapidity of light, Honoria started up and flew to take possession of a seat just vacated beside Mrs. Fothergill. Mr. Tudor, after a moment's pause, followed, and bowing stiffly, enquired with a mortified air whether he was to understand that it was Miss O'Hara's

cruel pleasure not to go down the second dance with him?"

"O no! certainly I will complete my engagement, only you must allow me to be dumb all the while, *till I have learned Latin.*" Even the playfulness of her smile and glance could not atone for the supposed affront put upon Mr. Tudor's deified language — of ridicule, he concluded such an august subject incapable; — he bowed more stiffly, slowly repeating, "*You must excuse me, Madam, if I decline accepting what I perceive would be a sacrifice.*" And with the air of one scorning her hand at the altar, the indignant lover walked magnanimously away.

Honorina used to his huffy fits, and aware how quickly they were forgotten, where she was the offender, rejoiced in the power of sitting still, for at least half an hour; and she therefore gave her attention willingly to Mrs. Fothergill, who was suddenly inspired with a few questions regarding the arrangement of the

rooms, and how the dinner was thought to have gone off.

During the long pauses between these important questions, Honoria, who was luckily shaded by the folds of a curtain, therefore sure of not being asked to dance till inclined to put herself forward, was amused by an audible dialogue between our witling, Mr. Sawbridge, and Major Stanhope.

“ So you have escaped at last, eh, poor Stanny ! ” was the salutation. “ Egad, I thought it was all over with you : when I descried you in the fangs of Mrs. Shafto — always delicately pared, I must confess, but still fangs.”

“ To be sure it grew into a bore at last ; ” replied the good-tempered officer : “ but Mrs. Shafto is really a very civil-meaning person ; and they give me a bed at their house to-night.”

“ Yea, verily ! and they will cheerfully give thee a wife to-morrow, if thou dost merely hint a wish of the kind.”

“ That’s being much too civil ! ” was

the careless reply. "However, as I detest a cold drive in a raw morning, or in a dark night, amongst a parcel of fellows after a ball, one half of them sulky, and t'other half drunk with conceit, because the women have been quizzing them into fancying themselves admired, I am vastly obliged to those Shaftos for housing me to-night."

"And what are they to do with you to-morrow?"

"Show me some place, I believe — really I forget — but it don't signify, for I shall be off directly after breakfast."

"The old trap! the old trap! and you talk of breaking out! poor Stanny! and you are to see a view from the top of a Belvidere?"

"Pshaw, no! — yes, — I think she did say something of a Bel-something."

"That woman kills me!" exclaimed Sawbridge laughing to suffocation. "She is capital! She's precisely like the man in the Vicar of Wakefield, with his one speech of the cosmogony of the world. My dear fellow! and didn't she talk about

the fine effect of singing, when heard from a certain underground grotto there?"

"No, no — yes — no — yes, faith, I remember." Here Major Stanhope laughed also, though it was after his own fashion, foolishly; for he felt silly, and on the verge of being taken in.

Sawbridge went off in what he called *fits*, which literally meant successive bursts of laughter; and when he recovered, with difficulty articulated, "All this was played upon me, seven years ago. I am proud to say it was the very first performance of the lady's: it was when Miss Shafto first *came out*. At that time I was *a catch*, a *bonne partie*, as the ladies phrase it. I had then my fair estates clear: not a soul of the tribes of Israel was of my acquaintance. I was, moreover, a simpleton of two and twenty. Of course, the very first time I appeared amongst the natives, I was invited to dine and sleep at the Place. At dinner the elegant Emily ate only vegetables and boiled chicken, drank iced water, was full of *les petites atten-*

tions, et les petits soins. In the evening no boring with song after song; Mrs. Shafto knew the *carte du pays* too well for that; so we had *jeux de société*, and *I shone!* that hit me devilish hard, I own: she was near hooking me. Next morning a breakfast *recherché*, side table covered with fruits and flowers, all to please my very refined taste, having just returned from Greece: the perspective of one with cold meat, and Mr. Shafto, seen through the folding doors of an inner room. At our table, Miss Shafto herself, presiding over the fragrant coffee-urn; clean and nice as her cambric handkerchief. She was prettyish then, by dint of frilling and furbelowing; now unluckily out of fashion."

"*Was!* O that's too bad, Sawbridge."

"Faith, seven years delve deep into beauty!" resumed the critic. "However Miss Shafto still dresses her feet uncommonly well. They'll take you in. You'll fancy she has pretty feet. So you will be

walked to the Belvidere (especially if the wind blows *moderately*); Miss Shafto will trip up the endless staircase just before you, you of course having offered your arm to the mother; then Miss Augusta will break out below from the grotto, with 'Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph,' in her voice of the peacock; after which—"

"No, — no, — no afters, I beseech you, Sawbridge!" interrupted Stanhope, annoyed at the humiliating notion of making one in a file of missed shots. "I won't hear another word."

Sawbridge held him fast by some of his military trappings. "Stay one moment, only one moment," cried the inexorable jester. "I am not going to say another word about the Shaftos; only tell me if you ever had the good luck to see a Fetch?"

"A what! What the devil's a fetch?" exclaimed Stanhope, not aware any lady overheard his demi-profane adjuration.

"Why in Scotch, a wraith; in French, a double; in English, your own ghost,

or any other person's: they and you in the body, though —"

"Pshaw — stuff — man! you're beside yourself."

"Then I'm my own fetch," smartly observed Mr. Sawbridge; "but only do me the favour of looking down the room, and you'll see Miss Shafto's at this very moment. By gad, a dainty economical spirit, for she represents all the three sisters at once!"

Honorina looked in the direction Mr. Sawbridge mentioned, and was not a little amused by the sight of Miss Bella Preston sailing up the room, in the exact costume of the Misses Shafto.

Miss Bella had so actively intercepted the secret of these ladies' dresses, that she was actually their polygraphic copy: like all copies rather overcharged: for she had more gold borderings, more spangles on her fillet, and gaudier armlets; added to which, she was herself taller and thinner, and the train of her lace dress was at least half a yard longer.

At that period, trains were sometimes said to be driving off in the shut of a carriage-door, while the wearers were just dropping their curtsy at the head of their entertainer's staircase.

“ And behold Tilburina also ! Tilburina gone mad ! ” exclaimed our witling, pointing his eye-glass at the pursy Miss Dulcy, arrayed in veils and white satin ; an undersized man in brown on one side of her, and a smirking one in pepper-and-salt on the other. “ Behold Tilburina between ‘ *the polyanthus mean, and dapper daisy !* ’ ”

Major Stanhope could not refuse something beyond a smile to this ridiculous quotation, and the more ridiculous group it pictured. Sawbridge choaking with mirth, went on, “ I wish you had been with me twenty minutes ago, in the tea-room, when those people entered ; there was another man with them. Such a treat ! three such treats ! — If I were the proprietor of those people, I would not sell them for a thousand pounds apiece,

I vow to gad they were as good as Punch and his wife, ay, and the devil into the bargain."

Here Mr. Sawbridge was choaked with the recollection of what his friend now loudly called on him to repeat.

"Why, there was the man," he endeavoured to say, "a spruce, slim prig of a fellow,—a stiff college-man,—a regular sap, I'll bet you a hundred!—talking of the Coliseum and the Conscript Fathers, and the Pæstum rose; flourishing about with his white hands to show them off, and an antique ring, big enough for a padlock—tenderly advising *the fetch* to drink sugared water, as the ladies of ancient Latium were supposed to owe their velvet skins to that beverage. Then the fetch's answer by way of French for Mentor, 'Ah, you are always a *menteur*!' Then Tilburina, 'But are not all saccharine substances or fluids inimical to the teeth? Do they not deteriorate?' Then, 'St. Peters' and 'the Vatican,' and 'the Pope' from the prig; and the '*Sacré collège des Cardinaux*' from the

fetch. O, capital! She shall teach the tongues to all my children that are to be! Hold me, my dear fellow, I shall break in twain with laughing."

Mr. Sawbridge's mirth was in fact so excessive, that many eyes were directed towards the place where he stood; some curiously, others in displeasure.

Major Stanhope, who was truly well-bred, and somewhat modest, kept repeating, "You are too bad, Sawbridge; pray be quiet. You are really too bad;" but Sawbridge was i' th' vein, and on he went.

"Then comes the county member's wife with some pretty apology to the fetch, and the mad blue-stocking, about not having returned a late visit of their mamma's. Upon which, my fetch, fetching up her very best French, and meaning to be most extremely amiable and conciliatory, and to compliment my Lady Henderson, and tell her she was privileged in such neglects, being a sort of public character; says — says —" Sawbridge's laughter was actually choaking him.

" Says! well, what does she say?" asked Stanhope, catching in spite of himself, the infection of his companion's overpowering laughter. " Don't keep the best joke to yourself after all."

Mr. Sawbridge was not in the least inclined to keep this super-capital blunder of Miss Bella's to himself; but it was some time before his often-checked and as often-conquering laughter would permit him to be intelligible. He then hastily bent his face to Stanhope's.

What transposition of words was breathed into the Major's ear, Honoria did not attempt to catch; she was satisfied to let it remain, as he had done

" Who left half-told

" The story of Cambuscan bold:"

concluding it must be something extremely awkward and absurd, from the convulsions of laughter into which even the well-bred officer immediately fell upon hearing it whispered.

As if by mutual agreement of no more provoking each other to such boisterous

merriment, the two gentlemen retreated different ways ; leaving Miss O'Hara tolerably well inclined to laugh with them ; though grieved that such ridicule was in a manner deserved by the daughters of Mrs. Preston.

She had barely time to answer Mrs. Fothergill's repeated questions of what all that laughing was about, (for Mrs. Fothergill was rather deaf,) when two of the unconscious objects of Mr. Sawbridge's mirth came, the one fashionably smiling, the other sentimentally sighing, close up to her, with their ever-respectable mother.

“ Dear, dear, Mrs. Preston !” half-exclaimed, half-whispered Honoria, warmly pressing the two hands affectionately held out, “ I feared you were not coming.”

The cordiality of their meeting made some ladies look as if they deemed it underbred ; yet every body affects cordiality : the reality then, is a fault ; — that is a mystery !

Mrs. Preston sat down between Mrs.

Fothergill and Honoria, the Misses Preston preferred proceeding on a voyage of discoveries. Miss Dulcy was soon apostrophising the moon, through the painted glass of the windows, by the side of Mr. Tudor, listening with rapt attention to his learned catalogue of names for the Goddess of the silver bow ; and begging hard to be allowed a little dislike to that of Hecate. While the faithful disciple of the ancients was endeavouring to inspire her sister with classical respect for a title degraded by vulgar notions only, Miss Bella looking and moving in all directions to detect every person of rank in the room, to register the peculiarities of their dress, and take minutes of their discourse, was elbowing her way (and formidable was that instrument in her person,) towards a very small parterre of young ladies with titles preceding their names.

In her progress, some one trod on part of her sweeping gown ; it rent with the withdrawing foot : the luckless destroyer started, stuttered, tried to apologize, held

out his hand to save tottering Miss Bella from falling ; heard her good-humoured “ O ! pray don't mind it ; ” and still holding her hand with the confused look of the most easily-confused person in the world, stammered out, “ a Miss Shafto, I believe ! I really, madam — I hope — I beg pardon ; I — I — may I beg the honour of leading you to — to — ” a *seat*, he *would* have said, “ to the *dance*,” he *did* say.

Miss Bella knew not if she were awake or dreaming ; for the embarrassed, rueful-looking speaker, who was all the while nervously squeezing an opera hat under one arm, while with the other he was dragging her forwards, was no less a personage than the Marquis of Brinkbourn ; a near relation, and, therefore, frequent visitant of the noble duke in the neighbourhood : a single man ; and, barring a very miserable person, that seemed born for nothing but to sit shut up in a sedan chair all the days of its mortal existence, and a sheepish shyness which

kept his whole body on the fidget, he might be considered a most brilliant partner, either for life, or in a dance.

Miss Bella's hand was now nervously griped by His Lordship's, her head was turning : her conscience was yet vigilant ; and making a truly heroic effort, she named herself, in contradistinction to Miss Shafto. But His Lordship was in the deep water, and there was no retreat for him, " All the same, madam ; any lady here ;" — and to the amazement of every one in the room, and out of the room, Miss Bella Preston was seen leading off " Drops of brandy" with the heir to a dukedom.

After the first buz of " Lord Brinkbourn's dancing with Miss Preston," " Where ? where ?" after the rush to look at them, the illustrious pair were left room to go down the dance, during which a feather might have been heard to drop.

Never, certainly, did illustrious pair acquit themselves worse. Lord Brinkbourn's diamond knee and shoe buckles

were always catching different parts of his partner's dress ; and Miss Bella's feet were so encumbered by her clinging lace train, which she had not taken time to fasten up properly, that fear and anxiety sharpened her visage visibly more and more.

This dancing with Lord Brinkbourn was certainly a martyrdom : like better martyrdoms it had its triumph, and its reward. Miss Bella was able to talk and write of it for the whole remainder of her life ; and as she never let any one into the secret of His Lordship's foregone confusion and mistake, his selection of her as a partner, stamped herself and her family as *good society* to all eternity in their county.

The few women of rank at Arthur's Court were too well acquainted with Lord Brinkbourn's embarrassed manner not to divine the jest ; and they were entertained. They were also too well bred to give it utterance beyond their own little set. But the half-way ladies, those who skirted the awful heights of

rank and fashion, were exceedingly affronted; declaring the Marquess's choice of such a partner, an absolute insult to all their county beauties.

Mrs. Shafto reconciled herself to it, first, by fancying Miss Preston owed her honour to the otherwise gross copy of her daughters' dresses; then by believing it would be a mortal blow to Miss O'Hara's pretensions as one of these mortal divinities: to be thus publicly pronounced inferior to Miss Preston, by the heir to a dukedom, must infallibly annihilate every particle of admiration she had inspired; yet how admired she had heard her! Mrs. Shafto looked round the room to see whether Honoria did not owe this transient supremacy to a particular dearth of pretty faces. But there were the two Ladies Lumley, with their skins of ivory, brows of jet, lips of coral, and looks of languishment: there were the four blushing daughters of the Dean of —, with the countenances and shapes of Hebes; looking through nut-

brown curls with the eyes of youthful joyance : then there was the pretty Lady Catherine Eustace with her slight form, light wreathing hair, eyes and veins of azure, eluding every attempt to detain her with a pretty coquetry which gave her the semblance of a *thing of air* : lastly, there was Mrs. Branspeth's heiress, lovely, decidedly lovely, but so much too-retreating ! How vexatious that this attractive heiress should be exactly what was calculated to set Miss O'Hara's style of beauty more strikingly off ! Miss Clavering was so very fair ; so very still ; so very downcast looking ! Miss O'Hara was so dark and bright at once ; so brilliant, yet so *blushful* ! Some one in Mrs. Shafto's hearing had compared these two beauties to the pearl and the diamond : it was insupportably mortifying ! However, Mrs. Shafto was comforted by the persuasion that Major Stanhope was either brow-beaten or flattered out of his sudden admiration of Miss O'Hara ; for after dancing with Miss Augusta Shafto, he

had taken refuge at the whist-table, where he was losing his money as fast, and as good-humouredly as possible.

Captain Fitz Arthur was relieved when he looked into the card-room and saw the Major at the same table with his father : Sir Everard's partner of course ; for when did Sir Everard ever win ?

But a new rival had arisen to disturb poor Fitz Arthur's serenity, in the person of Miss O'Hara's last partner, Mr. Frazer of Dunraven ; a Highland laird, with the quick keen eye, and manly bearing of his country : one that had travelled much, observed closely, and remembered all he considered note-worthy ; a fluent speaker, without oratorical ornament ; not a professed seeker of women's society, therefore the likelier to be wholly fascinated by one charming individual.

At dinner, Mr. Frazer had sat on the same side of the table with Miss O'Hara, too distant to hear or be heard by her : he was deep in debate with her uncle, whom he knew merely as the clergyman of Edenfell, and chose, therefore, to fall

upon, as a fit opponent in a learned field.

Frazer was naturally of a keen and controversial spirit which loved to grapple with an argument merely for the sake of feeling its own strength. Habit, and a roving life spent amongst strangers in foreign lands, had increased this inclination, and accustomed him, besides, to a certain freedom of address, and way of pouncing upon subjects, which sometimes disgusted, sometimes captivated people, just as their passions, prejudices, or opinions, did or did not run parallel with his.

Neither the time allotted for dinner, nor an hour afterwards, nor the period hitherto passed in the ball-room, had been sufficient for his eager appetite; so that he was still combating, with equal vigour and ability, the merely bookish reasonings of Mr. Meredith against the fantastical theory of black being the original colour of mankind; when, accidentally turning his head, his deep-set grey eyes met the large, liquid, and earnestly-

attentive ones of Honoria. Perhaps it was as much the complimentary expression of those eyes, as the brightness of them, which arrested and fixed him; for the hardy colouring of his cheek brightened with evident pleasure, while he said, in an audible under tone, "There, sir! look there, and tell me if darkness may not be light? blackness, beauty?" Mr. Meredith, seeing his niece, smiled; sighed, from some half-faded recollections; and, claiming her, presented his new acquaintance. Honoria, after a few civil words, entreated her uncle and the laird to finish the discussion, to which she had been listening, she said, with delightful interest. Mr. Meredith excused himself: he was weary of talking and attending to arguments; and he was used to early hours; and the chaise was to come for him at twelve o'clock, and it waited, and he must be gone. Mrs. Meredith was at cards in another room: Honoria could not be left sitting with Mr. Frazer, so there was no alternative

but to dance with him—to the dance therefore Mr. Frazer led her.

Amongst his other acquirements, the Laird of Dunraven was a geologist. The origin of mountains and the origin of nations were subjects equally attractive to his inquisitive spirit. Though but eight and thirty, he had traversed half Africa and Asia in pursuit of certain data upon which to found some favourite theories. His present residence in the north of England was the consequence of some fossil remains of “lions or unicorns” having been found in a cave there, which he wished to examine. Every body stared, therefore, when they saw the philosopher dancing with Mr. Meredith's niece.

Miss Augusta Shafto, who had of late taken a passion for fossils and minerals, even to learning the mystery of making spars out of vitriol and alum, now turned as green as one of her own compositions. Mrs. Shafto quietly shrugged up her shoulders, whispering, “That girl will

run herself out of breath, you'll see. She goes too fast, and with too many, to secure one. Don't mind, my love."

"I mind, ma'am!" repeated the haughty ill-tempered Miss Augusta; "be so good as spare your pity."

By the time that Honoria, light and graceful as mist blown on the wind, and Dunraven with the vigorous bound of a Scottish foot, had reached the bottom of the dance, Honoria's long hair got unfastened, and she hastily sat down that she might twist it up again, without attracting attention. A complimentary quotation from Ossian dropt the spark, and Honoria's enthusiasm blazed up directly. She talked of Ossian -- of green Erin, where so many of his scenes are laid; she found Mr. Frazer had been there, knocking at the Giants' Causeway, with pick-axe and hammer. He knew all the dear bleak hills, the brown turf bogs, the blue lochs, the flax fields, -- nay, every bleaching-ground round and about fondly cherished Ballygarry.

Honoria was suddenly and powerfully affected. The subject had taken her by surprise, in a scene so different! It was like being hastily waked; and she was forced to answer gaily, that her answer might not overcome herself. "Och! and is'nt it Hetty Macready that would have joy and pride to see the gentleman!" she involuntarily exclaimed, with a smile on the quivering lip imitating the brogue. The smile fled: her eyes were sparkling with tears — tears, natural, unrepresible — tears, sacred to the memory of her country — to that of the home where she had been bred — to the ashes of her parents — to the dust of that kind relative to whose bounty she owed present independence.

"And who is Hetty Macready?" asked Mr. Frazer, surprised by the mixed comic and pathetic of her tone. "I shall be only too happy to make the acquaintance of any friend of yours."

"My hair *will* fall down; I must fasten it better:" was her evasive exclamation,

as starting up, and putting her hand to its careless knot, she ran through an opened door into one of the passage rooms. She paused here, not to adjust her hair, but to wipe away the tears that were crowding fast into her eyes, and to chide herself, both for the emotion she was betrayed into, and the thoughtless exclamation she had made about her nurse. It seemed to claim Mr. Frazer's further acquaintance, and as such she regretted it.

And how foolishly weak was her present emotion! How often had she spoken of Ireland to Mrs. Preston, and spoken with sadness perhaps, but always tranquilly! Honoria forgot, that although she often talked of her country, she had never, till now, met any one in Northumberland, who spoke to her as having been there. The mere circumstance of Mr. Frazer's knowing all her old haunts, and some of her earliest acquaintance, seemed to raise them before her. Mr. Frazer's vivid mode of referring to places and persons was a

sort of return to dear Ireland. And should she not weep, indeed, when she saw Ballygarry again? Why then might she not shed a tear now?

Honoraria wore her father's picture — it had once been her mother's — and she always wore it under her dress. She faintly remembered her last sight of her father; for he died in India when she was eleven years old. She was but seven when he went, and his wandering life before that, had given him few opportunities of seeing his child. She remembered the sad and serious expression of his aspect, however, with tender respect.

She now drew this miniature from her bosom, and bent her lips to it. On raising her head, she was abashed by meeting the eyes of Captain Fitz Arthur. "My father's picture!" she said, blushing, and sliding it back. "I have been so foolish, Captain Fitz Arthur!" She could not say more without renewing her weakness.

"Tears, Miss O'Hara!" Fitz Arthur exclaimed, taking her hand with trepidation, and drawing her towards the room

he had just quitted. "I hope no one here; I trust nothing under my father's roof——" It was Fitz Arthur's turn to stop for want of words. Honoria hastened to relieve his kindly anxiety, by briefly and frankly telling him what had occurred; adding, "I just covet ten minutes to recover myself and cool my hot cheeks; for I must be a perfect pæony just now; and you know we silly girls stand dreadfully in awe of our own bad looks!"

"Well then, if you would not deem it incorrect to sit those ten minutes with Hylton, you will find him in that room alone, enjoying his share, poor fellow, of the dancing. I will carry your apology for the present to Mr. Frazer."

"Hylton alone! — I shall be so glad to have a little chat with him!" and disengaging herself from the trembling hand that scarcely touched the one it held, she vanished into a back room, where she found the pale placid boy, raised by cushions to a level with a small window overlooking the ball-room.

There was something heart-penetrating to her in this view of Hylton; his sickly look, languid attitude, his well-known helplessness, his glass of toast and water, his tasteless biscuit, nay, the very silence and solitariness of the chamber he was in, struck Honoria as peculiarly dismal, when contrasted with the glare, the noise, the mirth, the music, feasting, and festivity of the one she had left and he was looking into. When she remarked the meek and patient, nay, pleased expression of his pallid features, she could almost have asked his pardon for having been joyous.

“And you are alone, Hylton!” she said tenderly.

“Yes, just this moment, dear Miss O'Hara,” returned the amiable boy, extending his sallow hand to her; “but I have had visitors all the evening. Your kind uncle left the dinner-room to play a game at chess with me before the ball began; since then I have had my father and good Sir John Henderson, and dear, dear Delaval several times — he was here only a moment ago; and Abbot is

only gone to get some supper before he puts me in my chair and carries me to bed : nobody is taken so much care of as I am ; and now a lady comes to visit me ! Will you sit down by me awhile, or have you an agreeable partner waiting ? ”

Honorina was seated by Hylton instantly ; she was touched by his artless resignation to a fate peculiarly dreadful to one of that active sex, whose destination in life appears that of action.

The boy's taste, habits of thinking, of reading and of feeling, all tended to make him look with bitter regret upon a misfortune which would blight his usefulness, perhaps exclude him from much of the happiness of this world, and certainly incapacitate him from pursuing any path of honourable ambition ; a fate which would condemn him to dependence upon the humours and fortunes of those to whom he belonged ; a fate suffering and solitary : yet to such a fate Hylton appeared unaffectedly resigned.

The early lessons of his meek-spirited mother had been followed by the friendly tuition of Mr. Meredith; and insensibly imbibing a taste for religious studies, he found at once an object of pursuit on earth, and a blissful incitement to press on to Heaven. Hylton's wishes would have led to the Church as a profession, had his health permitted him to hope he should ever be able to fulfil its high duties: that impossible, he aimed at one day serving the sacred cause by his pen. Even now he wrote with ease and some elegance, and all his serious reading had the elucidation of Scripture customs or Scripture doctrines for its chief purpose. His regrets, moderated by the nature of his studies, he was solicitous only to show gratitude for the kindness bestowed upon his wearying feebleness. He knew his brother's generous heart was often laden with the fear that all had not been done that might have been, had his mother lived longer, or Sir Everard been less indolent; and eager to convince him that

Hylton could be as happy in his wheeled chair, or on his sofa, as the most active man on his feet, or on a horse, he was always to be found amusing or employing himself; ever thanking Heaven that the most precious avenue of enjoyment was left him—that of sight.

Forced bodily inactivity often renders the mind more active: it was so in Hylton's case. He reflected, even more than he read; for prolonged study being forbidden him by his physician, he read only such works as bore upon the subject most interesting to him. In this practice he was encouraged by his brother, whose judicious tenderness rejoiced to foster a taste or an ambition which tended to fortify the soul of Hylton against those natural sensibilities, which a passion for poetry and romance must have heightened. The society of well-informed persons, willing to answer the boy's sensible questions upon general subjects, was therefore of peculiar consequence to him—it stood in lieu of books.

"I am so pleased when I can get a page or two of you, dear Miss O'Hara," he said playfully. "I call you my story-book—you are so delightful! dear Delaval is my history."

"Nothing better than that!" exclaimed Honoria. "Poor Captain Fitz Arthur to be only dry history."

"Oh! but he is my Iliad and Odyssey too!" Hylton said hastily, jealous of his brother's reputation: "he makes me admire danger and warlike actions, too—too much sometimes." (The poor boy sighed, and a tinge of colour was visible through his pale cheek.) "I often think that admirable Hector must have been like my brother."

"I dare say!" was Honoria's answer, smiling with mixed expression. "At any rate, that hideous picture in the gallery is not the least like Captain Fitz Arthur."

"O, I am so glad you think so!" cried Hylton. "It is so very ill-looking; and Delaval is so very handsome!"

"Sweet boy! amiable boy!" burst involuntarily from Honoria; "how you

love your brother!" "Every body in the house loves him," returned her young companion. "He makes every body so happy! My dear father is quite a different person since he came home: even Thomas is not so naughty and rude with him, as he is with us. But then you see, Delaval is never put out of temper, let people be ever so cross or violent, and yet he never gives up a point."

Honoraria's feelings were in the mood suited to these overflowings of a heart full of our first best feelings, pure as they came from their spring. With more abandonment to her own sensibility, than her gay temper ever allowed in herself before witnesses, she suffered her eyes to suffuse, while she uttered a few kind questions, calculated to encourage Hylton in pouring forth this fond opinion of his brother.

In the midst of their interesting conversation, the slow step of John Abbot made her rise from her seat, and passing her hand over her eyes, she bade Hylton

good night, in her usual tone of cheerful kindness. The next moment she was in the ball-room, and the moment after that claimed by Mr. Frazer, as the lady upon whom he had the right of attending during supper.

For some time it was a most grievous supper to Captain Fitz Arthur. He stood directly opposite Miss O'Hara, behind the chair of Lady Catherine Eustace, who was either so fantastic as to like all sorts of things from the remoter end of the table, or was not unwilling, by such little commissions, to show her knight, a sworn one of hers being absent, that she would not disdain more flattering attentions from the heir of Arthur's Court. Continually moving to and fro, with confectionery, fruit, jellies, for the pretty coquette, he caught every now and then, just as much of Mr. Frazer's animated tones, looks, and gesticulations as tortured him with the imagination of more. Mr. Frazer was holding forth upon a favourite theme, the Phœnician origin of the Irish. He talked so well, though

so fast and hotly, that even Mr. Sawbridge, who was a listener, could not ridicule him. The occasion was tempting; for in truth, such a dissertation after a ball, in the presence of a score or two of young ladies, was not very well judged. Had the fashionable phrase been in use then, Mr. Sawbridge would indisputably have employed it; and, we should have heard him whisper, "Bad taste — exceeding bad taste."

Several of the by-standers, surprised at such a dissertation, pronounced the Laird of Dunraven a very odd person; no one called him vulgar. Nothing indeed is vulgar, except pretension. People who live much by themselves, may be rustic, or clownish, or over-bearing in their manner; but unless they aim at appearing something better bred, or better informed than they really are, they can never be vulgar.

Frazer's intrepid eccentricity, as much as the language he displayed it in, proclaimed him of *guide blude*; he was there-

fore suffered to go on without the interruption of a single contemptuous glance.

Captain Fitz Arthur almost envied the fluent tongue, and the sparkling satisfaction of Mr. Frazer; he quite envied him the delighted attention of Honoria, who was leaning back to listen, though without taking any other share in the discourse. The yew-tree-shaped squire, who had sat next her at dinner, supported in this memorable exhibition of oratory, the honourable and useful part of the talking stock. Mr. Frazer being obliged to find some *sponsibile* person, whom he must appear to be informing, ingeniously guessed at the capacity of the squire, as an Oh! and Ah! respondent; and laying hands on him, stationed him by his side.

Honoria listened to them, with a kindling face, and throbbing form, which showed what an interest she was taking in this genealogy of her country. Fitz Arthur now gave himself up for lost. Miss O'Hara had obviously captivated Mr. Frazer, and Frazer evidently per-

ceived that he pleased her. Fitz Arthur saw it in the eager fire of his elated rival's eyes; he heard it in the exulting tone of his voice. For some minutes our poor lover was utterly incapable of knowing what his fine lady tormentress wanted, or asked; he was not sorry when he made out that she wished him to lead her to her chaperon, who was rising from the other end of the table, their carriage having been announced.

After duly escorting her sylph-like Ladyship along the halls and galleries leading to the grand entrance, seen her into her mother's coach, stood properly shivering without a hat, on the steps of the portico, till the coroneted vehicle drove off, Fitz Arthur returned with seven-league strides to the supper-room.

Greatest part of the company were returned to the dance, and the attendant gentlemen had now found seats beside their ladies. As he hoped, as he feared, he saw Miss O'Hara still there, and Mr. Frazer seated between her and Mrs.

Meredith. The latter always last to leave an eating-room. Upon seeing Captain Fitz Arthur re-enter, Honoria (unconsciously at the instant, and afterwards she could not well say why she did it,) made a movement to rise, and leave her knight to finish his supper without her. Fitz Arthur remarked the movement, and the slight embarrassment of manner which had followed the glance, that told her of his re-appearance. A second time this evening, his heart throbbed with troubled, doubtful, lover-like hopes,—the next moment, he was his sad self again.

“Sit down, Honor!” exclaimed Mrs. Meredith, not in her company voice, so alarmed was she at the idea of thus losing a mountain of trifle, which the shrewd Laird of Dunraven had just heaped her plate with. Electrified by the warning tone, Honoria was in her seat immediately: she dreaded an exposure of Mrs. Meredith’s temper.

Mr. Frazer was now talking of the Eolian harp. Honoria had never heard either that or the nightingale. The

Laird was a great mechanic. "I will make you an Eolian harp in a week's time," he said, with easy gallantry, "if you will do me the honour of accepting it; but to hear the nightingale, you must allow some happy man to carry you to the South of France. I should recommend this very spring."

Mr. Frazer was known to be on his way to the Pyrenees: and all who heard his present recommendation, considered it as a public proposal of marriage. Honoria, alone, did not understand any thing beyond the obvious meaning of his words, and with an unchanged countenance began playfully to question the superiority of the nightingale over her favourite sky-lark.

Mrs. Shafto, in her capacity of inquisitor-general, had remained with the lingerers round the supper-table. She now suddenly stretched across it addressing Mrs. Meredith with — "You and I never meeting any where, Mrs. Meredith, really has given me no opportunity of repeating my thanks for your so obli-

gingly accommodating Signor Vocallino with a room at the parsonage to give my daughters their lessons. We are such a comfortably reduced party here, just at this moment, that I am sure the Misses Shafto will have infinite pleasure in showing you what their lessons have turned out."

Mrs. Meredith was in as vulgar a fuss of acknowledgments, and sense of the great honour, as the great lady could desire. She was quite sure, she said, that she should be charmed with the Misses Shafto's singing. — Such an education! They must be so accomplished! Often and often had she listened in the passage when the young ladies were singing with their master — and wished so that she might have gone in to them.

"And why did you not, my good madam?"

"O dear ma'am — gracious for ever! You can't suppose, ma'am, I should take such a liberty, — I could not think of any thing so unpolite, — I would not make so free for any money."

Mrs. Shafto was all smiles and civility; her point was gained — the vulgarity of Miss O'Hara's relations (to quote fashionable slang,) completely *shown up* to the Laird of Dunraven. After this, he could never repeat his recommendation of the South of France; probably he would not even choose to waste wood and wire upon an Eolian harp.

Miss Shafto and Miss Augusta secretly as much elated as their mother, by the brilliant success of her stratagem, cast a glance at the Laird, who they saw eyeing his vulgar neighbour with steady composure. Captain Fitz Arthur thought the Laird was considering how he should *cut her* entirely after he married Honoria; the Misses Shafto decided he was thinking how to *cut* at once both aunt and niece.

Under this agreeable impression they began to sing with a spirit quite unusual with them, a popular duet in the opera of Dido.

"Very well, indeed! vastly well!" exclaimed Mr. Frazer, who always took the lead whenever any thing was to be said.

“Your daughters credit their master, Mrs. Shafto : I really did not think when I heard them some months ago at your own house, that they could have been taught to sing half so pleasantly.” It must be remembered, that the Laird of Dunraven did not generally affect women’s society ; therefore, when his vanity or his heart were not ministered to by one of the sex, he was somewhat unceremonious to them.

Another lady was solicited, and sang ; then another and a gentleman with her. All chose Italian songs. “ Italian music indifferently sung, is very poor work after all : very poor work !” muttered Mr. Frazer. Then exalting his voice, “ Can, or will, no lady favour us with a song in our mother-tongue ?”

“ Certainly not in yours,” observed Captain Fitz Arthur smiling, “ unless Miss O’Hara knows Gaelic. I know she sings English, Irish, and Scotch ballads : and I am one of the unscientific who will plead for a song in an ordinary language.”

Honorina blushed vermilion, and would

have excused herself; for, though quite hardened to singing before strangers when a child in Ireland, and singing now frequently in the garden to Mrs. Preston, or on the hill-side to her dog and the echoes, she was so entirely out of the habit of exercising her vocal powers in a circle, that she felt fluttered and irresolute — anxious to oblige, yet fearful of failing.

Mrs. Shafto was so sure that such an uneducated girl must sing out of time and tune — that she could know nothing of cadences — that, consequently, it would be so greatly to the Misses Shafto's advantage to let her sing, that Mrs. Shafto joined in the civil importunity. Even her daughters mangled some words of entreaty, as they lifted their eyeglasses with the precision of a military movement, and stared at the blushing attempt of Honoria to laugh at her own nervousness.

A side glance from Mrs. Meredith determined our heroine. It was the flash before the thunder. Honoria's red lips

unclosed, and the balmy voice was heard.

She had accidentally chosen the beautiful melody of "Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon." Its pathetic simplicity was suited to her taste and her tones: and while those tones sank into every heart of human softness, not another sound was heard in the room. Every body was so attentive that Honoria's agitation returned; and looking on either side, as if for help, she was on the point of abruptly stopping, when Captain Fitz Arthur with something of tremor in his voice, gave timely support to her trembling notes, by a low and beautiful second.

The glittering illumination of her whole countenance amply repaid him for the violence he had done his own retiring character. She went admirably through the remainder of the song; for the loveliness of his tones, and of his style, inspired her with yet tenderer softness than did the air itself. Certainly, when a man's voice is of a fine quality, it is capable of more expression, more

variety; — it has, in short, a mellower sweetness, and a deeper pathos, than the voice of a woman. If, therefore, Honoria's notes wanted strength or fulness, Fitz Arthur's supplied them; and as their voices, now receding, now advancing, now soaring into one, thrilled in the ear of Fitz Arthur, his heart thrilled also with momentary delight. For did not Honoria's spirit seem then mingling with his?

But she had chosen a Scottish instead of an Irish air. It was quite clear, therefore, that she intended to please Mr. Frazer. This plain inference soberized the lover's fancy; and when they concluded, with merely a pensive smile and bend of the head, he replied to her rapid acknowledgments: "To think I should never have heard of your singing!" she exclaimed. "Fie, Captain Fitz Arthur! this is using your friends very shabbily."

Mrs. Shafto faced round upon our heroine, with a look of supercilious surprise. The words and manner of Miss O'Hara indicated that familiar compa-

nionship with their kinsman, which warranted a suspicion of further views in one of them at least. Mrs. Shafto was confounded. In her own thoughts she had long ago settled a marriage between her eldest daughter and the heir of Arthur's Court, provided nothing better stepped in; and provided the estates were not ruinously dipped. Ever cautious of committing herself, the kind mother was only waiting for certain information from an ally, to begin her operations accordingly. So absorbed was she by the speculations suddenly excited in her, that she failed to join the clamour of applause breaking in upon Miss O'Hara's exclamation.

"And who shall say, after this, that the nightingale is never heard in Northumberland?" ejaculated Mr. Frazer.

Honorina blushed, and vainly tried to turn aside the compliment by bending her head to her partner in the duet. Fitz Arthur felt heart-sick: the three thin shades turned green.

"Every lady her own Philomel!" muttered Mr. Sawbridge, who had lounged

in with others at the sound of singing, and was now helping to block up the door-way, just behind Mrs. Shafto, "Every lady her own Philomel! Vide Advertisements in newspapers."

The benevolent Mrs. Shafto turned upon him with a gracious smile, and a glance expressive of approbation. "Mr. Sawbridge, may I beg you will have the goodness to ask for my carriage? Miss Shafto, my love, Sir Thomas Butterby will be so obliging as enquire for your shawl. Major Stanhope, I believe you belong to us. Augusta, my dear, — Matilda, dearest!" The tender mother had her whole brood under the maternal wing in two minutes.

When Mrs. Shafto arose, could Mrs. Meredith sit? A large glass of delicious Cup was left unfinished, while Mrs. Meredith, with repeated bends and servile speeches, stood curtsying out her *Great Lady*.

Mrs. Shafto's civilities would have honoured a French diplomatist. She was civiller than Lord Chesterfield him-

self; so marking the vast distinction of degree between herself and the person she addressed: she condescended to murmur some questions about certain loads of fire-wood; whether they appeared punctually — were of the right quality, quantity, &c. I must do her the justice to say, in so low a voice, that but for the audible responses of Mrs. Meredith, (proud of her patroness's favours,) not one of the by-standers could have guessed the exact nature of these mysterious whisperings.

The expected answers obtained, and another poisoned arrow shot, therefore, at Miss O'Hara's *airs of consequence*, the elegant mistress of Shafto Place finally disappeared; handed out by that very Mr. Sawbridge who had ridiculed her so unmercifully, but whose vanity could not resist her flattering glance, after his last miserable joke.

Honor's proud spirit, meanwhile, was inwardly champing the bit. She longed to tell Mrs. Meredith how shamefully she was degrading her husband and

herself, from that respectable station to which he was entitled by birth, breeding, and sacred calling, and which she might demand in quality of his wife. But to speak without the purpose either of pleasing, persuading, consoling, or commending, was not in Honoria's character. She never wanted to provoke, not even to vent temporary spleen. Conscious that on this, as on other occasions, Mrs. Meredith could only be provoked, and was quite incapable of listening to, or profiting by, reason, she curbed her indignant impulse, and merely looking down, prepared to follow her disagreeable chaperon in the duty of wishing Sir Everard and Mrs. Fothergill good night.

Perfectly self-assured, Mr. Frazer hastened after them with blunt forwardness: his very ignorance of women's characters making him rash in his conclusions upon their conduct. "I take care of Miss O'Hara down stairs," he said, casting on those round him a glance between triumph and defiance. "Depend on it, Miss O'Hara," he added, with

hardy frankness, though in a lowered voice, "that I shall not easily give up even half an hour's right to this pretty little hand."

Honorina endeavoured quietly to withdraw her arm from his, over which he had drawn it; but he grasped the hand he spoke of, and that so firmly, that she could not disengage herself without a struggle. She was obliged, therefore, to submit. The appearance of Sir Everard and of Mrs. Fothergill in the room whence they were going to seek them, promised a quicker termination of Honorina's thralldom. "That good lady before us," the Laird asked, "she that is speaking to the Baronet, is only your uncle's wife! not your blood relation?"

"Only my uncle's wife," answered Honorina, dryly.

"Yes, yes; I thought so — I was sure of it," Mr. Frazer rejoined. "Then I don't care a gowan for her! And where did you learn that charming song of my country? I assure you ——"

Honorina interrupted his assurance by

replying, "In *my* country, Mr. Frazer ; it was the last song I learnt there, so it was naturally the first in my thoughts. I owe no compliment to *your* country ; she uses mine basely ! She makes a foray upon our music, carries off the sweetest airs, then passes them on England as her own. I am quite sure the ' Banks and braes o' bonnie Doon ' is an Irish air. I will maintain the superior antiquity and beauty of our music over yours."

The Laird of Dunraven's spirit of controversy and disputation was roused ; it was too strong for infant love. The shade which had fallen over his brow when Honoria pointedly accounted for her choice of a Scottish song, suddenly cleared off, while preparing himself for combat, with " a voice loud and spriteful as the trumpet of the challenger," he called upon some one of the gentlemen present to take up the gauntlet, and enter the lists for the lady.

" Behold the champion of Scotland !" he exclaimed, with a vivacity and ardour not ungraceful, though pronounced in

rather too declamatory a tone. "Who stands forth for the accuser?"

Four or five gallant voices were heard at once, proffering aid to the feebler side, though professing total ignorance of the nature or merits of the cause. Amongst these was not Fitz Arthur: a sad stillness of the heart had seized him, — all seemed over. This temerity of Mr. Frazer's spoke of certainty in his views upon Honoria. He could not surely risk opposition to her opinions, had he not assured himself, that she would be pleased with a public display of his talents and information. Fitz Arthur smothered a sigh or two, and drew back. Mr. Frazer found a serious opponent: a young man, whom no one hitherto had noticed after the first introductory civilities, except those who brought him to Arthur's Court.

This person had neither danced, played cards, flirted, nor grouped with the other men; he had moved noiselessly about the room, as little regarded as a cat in a garden; and having a large green shade

over his eyes, and being besides rather slovenly dressed, failed to attract the attention of the ladies. It was the more noble in him, to buckle on his armour in Miss O'Hara's quarrel.

Honorina, however, more distressed than grateful, looked round for Captain Fitz Arthur. "Only let me run away from this battle before it begins," she exclaimed, all confusion, yet trying to treat it lightly. Fitz Arthur had hold of her hand the next moment; he was all warm life again. Honorina's heart must have turned to him for protection,—he would not *think* so, — he could but *feel*, that it had.

With a cheek of fire, eyes that dared not trust themselves with looking on her, lest they should betray this brief transport, and respiration short and fluttering, he hurried her through the door-way, followed by the clamorous "Stop, stop!" of Mrs. Meredith, who though eager to avoid the threatened disputation, chose to be taken as good care of as her husband's niece.

Meanwhile the two mortal combatants set their lances in their rests, and *addressed* themselves in good earnest to fight. One important feature, however, was wanting in this mimic combat, to give spirit to both, or at least to one, of the knights, the presence of the lady for whom it was undertaken. This accident at first disconcerted Mr. Frazer; but quickly recollecting, that his beautiful mistress was at the mercy of her chaperon, he accounted for her desertion of the field in no unflattering way, and betook himself, of course, to win a brighter fame for her approval.

The astonished Laird of Dunraven soon found he was measuring weapons with as resolute a knight as himself, and one better skilled in the arts of attack and defence. Proofs, quotations, illustrations, all the missiles of antiquarianism, poured upon him like hail:—head, back, breast were battered. The obscure knight wielded so trenchant a faulchion, and laid it on so unsparingly, yet so gallantly, that his annoyed antagonist, after a long

struggle, though disdaining to allow himself conquered, was obliged to admit that his strength was exhausted, and that he must be permitted therefore to breathe awhile.

Captain Fitz Arthur, who had returned to the room immediately after seeing Honoria into her uncle's hack chaise, now interposed. "Most of us here being 'men of the north countrie,'" he said, with benevolent concern for his rival's discomfiture, "are too much interested in our champion's success not to wish *his* plume to triumph; but as we must all be admirers of Miss O'Hara, we cannot desire to see *her* knight on the knee; I shall therefore advise my father to use his prerogative, and break down the lists."

The gentleman with the great green shade bowed gravely in token of assent; and, the tilting ended, seemed at once to retire into himself again: but Mr. Frazer awkwardly clamoured for a promise of renewing the combat, when both combatants might have had time to pro-

vide themselves with fresh arms. The knight of the shamrock answered evasively, yet courteously.

Sir Everard, who had followed his son's counsel, and *dismissed the field* with some humour, followed it up, by shaking the unknown gentleman by the hand very cordially, saying, "Thank you, thank you, my good young sir, for the great treat you and Mr. Frazer have given us. I have not heard such excellent wrangling since I left Trinity. I shall be heartily glad to see you again if you remain in this part of the world. I crave your pardon, sir, but the honour of your name, if you please. I am getting a little deaf. I really did not catch it, when Mr. Charles Raby did us the favour of introducing you."

"Gubbins, — Mr. Peter Gubbins!" hastily called out young Raby, from another end of the room, answering for his friend. "By the way, Gubbins, our chaise has been waiting this hour."

The person addressed made a rapid bow all round, without trusting himself

to speak ; and getting away as fast as he could, Captain Fitz Arthur heard such a burst of laughter, immediately follow the closing of the door, that he guessed the reason of the stranger's silence, and precipitate retreat, must be to cover some jest played off upon his father. The laughter, however, was distinctly only from Mr. Raby. Fitz Arthur was neither a choleric, nor a petulant man, yet he felt an emotion of displeasure at this unseasonable mirth. If it were in ridicule of his father's old-fashioned hospitality, it must be apologized for ; if in elation of the success of some trick, or some bet, it ought to be explained satisfactorily. He followed, with the intention of obtaining an amicable explanation ; but the offenders were too quick for him : they had been driven off the instant before, by four horses, seemingly as mad with spirits as themselves, and to follow them, would be making too serious an affair of what after all might be merely the laugh due to some previous jest, unconnected with him or his. He returned,

therefore, without observation to the party he had left, and having exchanged with them a few remarks, upon "that devilish clever young fellow," as Mr. Frazer called the stranger, "only so over-keen, that he did not give his adversary the fair play of time to think;" the company departed, — tables were cleared, — lights extinguished; — and, one by one, masters and servants took up their solitary candle: — one by one, doors were heard to shut, — voices and steps to cease. In another half hour, there was not a single creature moving or awake in the old mansion, — save only Delaval Fitz Arthur. He was in bed certainly; but Honoria "had murdered" *his* sleep. And alternately thrilling with a hope, inspired by her last act of the evening; then sinking at the recollection of her evident interest in Mr. Frazer's conversation; and lastly, convincing himself that, circumstanced as he was, to think of such a wife was criminal, he wore out the few remaining hours of the night.

CHAP. IV.

WHILST the inhabitants of Arthur's Court were clearing away the decorations of "feast and floor," Honoria and her aunt were rattling home in their hack post-chaise: the latter scolding the driver all the way (not without reason,) for having put wet straw at the bottom of the vehicle, instead of a bit of old carpet, — scolding the very moon for not shining, — and rating Honoria for having *no more manners than a bear, looking at and noticing Mrs. Shafto so cavalierly.*

Not even the jingle of a hack chaise, with all its appurtenances of loosened window-frames, shaking doors and steps, and clattering-hoofed horses, — not even its joltings over ruts with their edges sharpened by frost, could drown the angry clamour of Mrs. Meredith. Honoria hoped in vain that these increased joltings, when they got upon the worst

part of the road, would at least suffocate some tones of that discordant voice ; but a sinner might as reasonably have hoped to smother the cries of conscience. In vain did our heroine maintain with equal temper and firmness the dignity of her blood, as an O'Hara and a Meredith of the West Riding ; her uncle's wife was bent upon groveling in the dust, at what she deemed a high superior's feet, for the sake of securing more means to dazzle an inferior's eyes.

Every one's integrity, it has been said, has its price. Now, if Mr. Peter Gubbins would enter the lists for me, I would combat that argument with any one, for the sake of poor human nature : but my own unassisted strength retreats.

I must acknowledge that the axiom was true in Mrs. Meredith's case : she would have bartered her husband's respectability, and her own independence, at any moment for a lace cap, or a new pelisse. The fuel and butter from Shafto Place had already gone half way towards securing a gown of the richest maron

velvet. How then could Mrs. Meredith fail to be the eternal laureate of Mrs. Shafto?

She now, with more than her usual venom, contrasted her great lady's munificence with "the shameful shabbiness of her husband's brother in India: who had never, no not all the years she had been married to his brother, never sent her a single present; not till Miss Honor, forsooth, was come to have bed and board under her roof. This was a relation indeed, to be proud of! For her part she did not give much credit to the rank and riches of far-away folk. Mr. John Meredith might have his letters directed to the Honourable J. Meredith, Chief Judge, Privy Councillor, &c., and yet have no right to the title. For her part she wished she saw substantial proofs of his wealth. Mr. Meredith had never been the better of a guinea of his money: and never had any thing from him except a heap of old rubbish of coins and stones, and carvings and books, that he made presents of himself,

she supposed by way of getting rid of them."

Honorina was in duty bound to repeat some of her Edenfell uncle's explanations in defence of his brother. The former professed himself satisfied with his income — he had no children — his widow would have a provision at his death from a Life Insurance Company, to which he paid annually for that purpose — and he neither wished nor wanted to incur pecuniary obligations needlessly even to a brother. Mrs. Meredith ought to remember, that the judge's situation in India was more honourable than lucrative, that it called for an expensive style of living — that besides, he had not enjoyed it many years — that he believed, upon the faith of his brother, that his nearest relations were in easy though plain circumstances, and that consequently he never dreamed of transmitting them money — that he was now married, and to a woman full twenty-five years younger than himself, likely to bring him a large family. Still,

however, he *had* been kind, he had been generous — he had invited Honoria to go and live with them — and he had twice sent over a box of such Indian manufactures as English ladies are known to prize.

The *woven-air* in which Honoria was dressed that evening — the Cachemire shawl in which she was wrapped — the fine cornelians on the person of Mrs. Meredith, were no inconsiderable proofs of her distant uncle's liberality when proper offerings were suggested to him, by his liberal young wife.

This unfortunate eulogium drew down a torrent of reproaches upon Honoria herself, for her folly and obstinacy in refusing to accept the proposal of taking her, made by the judge's lady. If her uncle were such a great man, and his wife so wonderfully kind, why did not she go out to them and marry one of their Bengal nabobs?

Honoria now could only remain silent. She knew Mrs. Meredith would scoff at every one of those delicate and

affectionate feelings, which had been met with the tenderest sympathy and approval by her uncle the clergyman : and which had she not felt, Honoria would have loathed herself.

She had a home, uncomfortable as it was ; — she had an income sufficient for a single woman's frugal maintenance in the north ; — above all, she had an uncle to whose happiness she even believed herself essential. Thus circumstanced, neither the prospect of splendour, nor the offered kindness of unknown relatives, could tempt her to leave Edenfell.

Luckily for her at this moment Edenfell was in sight. Mrs. Meredith lashed herself into such a fury at her companion's silence, that when the chaise stopt at the gate, she was well-nigh choaked ; and ere she could recover, or begin bargaining away the postboy's right to an extra half-a-crown for going twice to Arthur's Court, Honoria flew past her, and gained the sanctuary of her own room.

Having a second sight of a visit from

Mr. Frazer, Honoria hastened directly after breakfast the next day to Hazeldean, where she fell in with many of the party she had danced amongst the evening before.

Mrs. Preston, good-humoured, cheerful, and hospitable, gave a welcome to every one. She and her daughters were always well, happy, and kindly; their house, therefore, was always pleasant. Their roses were always earlier in blow—and their fruits, sooner ripe than any other person's: their very cows seemed of a liberal temper; for if cream and syllabub were to be had no where else, they were sure to be found at Mrs. Preston's. In hot weather, all the ordinary morning, a table under the shade of trees, or in winter within the sphere of a cheering fire, was set out with refreshments adapted to different tastes and appetites, — and perfect freedom allowed the visitors to walk into the house, or stay without; talk, or be silent. This freedom and hospitality made Mrs. Preston's cheerful little residence the lounge of all the

idlers, the rendezvous of all the social, and the home of all the affectionate, in and about Edenfell.

After the Arthur's Court ball, of course, there was a greater *gathering* than usual at Hazeldean; and a quicker consumption of Mrs. Preston's *bœuf pendu*, as Miss Bella called it, cheese-cakes and made wines (the only wine she allowed herself thus to "*set at flow*"). The incidents of the ball were recapitulated — beauties criticised — dresses *quizzed* — a little harmless gossip indulged in — and each individual's particular adventures recounted dully or amusingly. Every incident sunk into insignificance compared with the description of Mr. Frazer's discomfiture. At first, the details of this singular occurrence were given with extreme reserve, by such of the ball-goers as had previously observed the Laird's undisguised admiration of Miss O'Hara; but on her eager questioning, and genuine enjoyment of the scene, though imperfectly described, the describers grew bolder, and some youthful

laughter at the learned Highlander's expense was the consequence.

In the midst of their mirth Captain Fitz Arthur was announced. His entrance appeased the storm, and the subject was soon treated in its worthiest way.

The surprising talents of Mr. Frazer's much younger antagonist were dwelt upon by Captain Fitz Arthur with unfeigned admiration. Such of Mrs. Preston's party as had heard the debate, and were qualified to estimate its merits, joined him in eulogium. Miss Preston, however, clamoured loudly against the stranger's "horrid *nom de batiste*;" though admitting his "*grand talon*!" then renewed her recommendation of the "*bœuf pendu*;" complacently adding, "*J'ai mangé un bouchon*, and find it excellent: pray follow my example!"

Every person present looked at the moment as though they had literally taken her advice; and half-choaking, tried to smother their laughter, by simultaneous enquiries of who Mr. Gubbins was.

Captain Fitz Arthur could only answer, that an invitation having gone to Raby Hall, and none of the family being there, except the young templar, he had come over presenting this gentleman, whom Fitz Arthur remembered he had said he was going off with, the next day to Edinburgh.

All source of further information was therefore stopped for the present; and the impatient Northumbrians must wait for Mr. Charles Raby's return, ere their curiosity could hope for gratification.

By the time that Fitz Arthur, with a talent little inferior to what he was describing, had faithfully *reported* the arguments of Mr. Gubbins, repeating them in terser language, — by the time he had shown that gentleman's array of brilliant figures, felicitous analogies, and decisive conclusions, — showing too, how they bore down the less orderly and less splendid ranks of his opponent — Honoria was almost in love with her knight of the shamrock.

She idolized genius; she loved dear, trodden-down Ireland, as her thoughts

often called it; and she was ready to kiss the hand that helped to raise her country from the dust. The little mysteriousness, also, that there was in Mr. Gubbins's entrance and exit from Arthur's Court — the odd, back-ground figure he had chosen to play there, till the moment of leaving it — and, above all, his having cast aside this under-character for her sake, were so many incitements to curiosity, and calls upon interest.

The old leaven of early romance began to work in her. She recollected, with secret pleasure, that on the evening before, when she was accidentally passing a table where this gentleman was hastily swallowing some tea, his green shade had fallen down, and though in catching it in the act of falling, his hand covered the lower part of his face, she had observed a forehead like Parian marble, and eyebrows of the blackest and finest marking. She remembered the circumstance had struck her, simply from the discordance of these brows with his hair, which was of a dull ash-colour. Memory had

almost unconsciously registered such observation. But his name was not romantic. Peter was actually un-loveable! Gubbins was dreadful! Yet stay — it was something in Ireland: — it was the name of one distinguished family there. If, then, this eloquent defender of her country were her countryman also, how could she fail to fall most imaginatively in love with him?

She now took a very lively share in the conversation, joining finally in the opinion, that Mr. Gubbins, from his shining talents, must be studying for the bar. His appearance in company with a templar had suggested the idea.

“Whatever he may be,” Captain Fitz Arthur concluded, in his usual spirit of amiable remark, “he is obviously a gentleman of the first class. Our over-eager friend, the Laird of Dunraven, seemed a little —” clownish beside him, Fitz Arthur would have said; but checking himself for Miss O'Hara's sake, he added hesitatingly — “a little too vehement, with so courteous an antagonist.”

Mr. Frazer's name producing some enquiries about him, produced also the information of his having just left the Rectory, and being now on his way to Hazeldean, where he talked of calling after he had been to a good-humoured friend's, where he expected to obtain some harp-strings for his Eolian lyre. Honoria discovered that Mr. Frazer was on horseback: the bridle road was much more circuitous than the foot-way to Hazeldean; she was just in time to avoid him. Captain Fitz Arthur heard her whisper to Miss Bella (for your lovers are particularly endued with the faculty of hearing upon certain occasions), that she begged she would not notice her disappearance, as she must slip away for dinner at home. Bella, in return, smilingly accused her of having made *an assignat*: Fitz Arthur smiled too, while ringing for his horse. Ere it was announced, Honoria vanished.

After ascertaining her stealthy departure, Fitz Arthur with a *ruse* pardonable in a lover and a soldier, rode off full

speed, in full sight of all at Hazeldean ; then, when completely out of view, dismounted as hastily, and bidding his groom ride on with the horses to the Fitz Arthur Arms, and wait him there, struck into the fields, where leaping ditches, and vaulting over gates, he startled Honoria by suddenly alighting before her from the opposite side of a hedge, as though he had dropped from the sky.

The little cry she uttered, and the rich crimson that instantaneously spread her face and neck, were too evidently from surprise : there was no confusion in her eyes as she turned them with pleased and thankful expression upon Fitz Arthur. He, meanwhile, with the proper cowardice of a lover, was apologizing for the fright he had thrown her into, pleading, in excuse, some unimportant message from Mrs. Fothergill which he had forgotten to deliver, and just hinting at his fear of letting her walk home unprotected.

“ O you must not make me afraid of rambling about by myself. I admit that it is not quite safe when the gipsies

are about ; perhaps you think not quite right in a young lady ;"— (Honor's smile had enchantment in it ; for it seemed to own faultiness by its attempt to win indulgence ;) — " but I was bred a wild thing. Free air and liberty are my life and soul. We have neither carriage, nor lady's horse, nor lady's page at the Rectory — nay, not even a garden with one gravel walk for trailing up and down in, by way of looking abroad on nature. My uncle is not always in the idle humour to admit me into his study ; and the rooms below are, I may whisper it to *you*, not particularly to my taste, in any way ; so what am I to do ? e'en set a stout heart and face upon it — determine to believe nobody will harm me, or, what is more to the purpose, suspect me of harm, — and so go on vagabondizing by myself. Do you know, I really think there are more scrapes to be got into, in a room full of well-dressed, well-behaved, civilized people, like all of you at Arthur's Court last night, than amongst hedges and ditches."

“What scrape could Miss O'Hara get into at Arthur's Court?” gently asked Fitz Arthur, wishing to lead her to some of that confidential conversation, which not unfrequently gave him the happy privilege of being useful to her, either by his counsel or his interference.

“I don't know — I ——” Honoria looked aside as she spoke; “but I feel uncomfortable with myself. You know, Captain Fitz Arthur, that you have accustomed me to speak to you now and then, as if you were my relation, so shall I honestly own, that I feel that forward Mr. Frazer ought not to have taken it for granted, that I would accept his Eolian harp; he ought not to go parading about the country, enquiring for harp-strings! There, I see your eyes asking me, if I did not mean to accept it. Certainly I did, at the moment he offered it; but afterwards, I resolved otherwise; when I saw him so free and easy, and determined to fancy I thought him clever and agreeable.”

“And did you not think him clever

and agreeable?" her companion ventured to ask.

"Be quiet, Captain Fitz Arthur," cried Honoria, with that pretty childishness of manner, which is so captivating, when it mixes up well with sound sense, and dignity of carriage, upon proper occasions. "You shall not scare me thus at myself. I know you want to convict me of not having been dumb and stiff enough at first." (Fitz Arthur smiled, perhaps assentingly.) "Well!—you don't look very merciless, — so I will be magnanimous, and confess I *was* to blame. I am so apt to hearken to a clever person talking, with such a thirst for every thing they say, or can say, that I quite forget they are a living thing and not a book. Well, I won't do so again if I can help it: not even if that wonderful Mr. Gubbins be the volume in hand. Only tell me, dear Captain Fitz Arthur, I charge you, tell me with a true friend's sincerity — with as much honesty as if you were my brother — if I *deserved* that Mr. Frazer should make so sure I

would accept his harp, and be gratified by his telling me that he did not regard my unpleasant aunt a *gowan*?"

The person Honoria addressed, no longer heard even her. He was lost! That thrilling "*dear* Captain Fitz Arthur," had undone him. He knew not where he was, what he was doing, or what he meant to say. He forgot that he had resolved long ago, never to think of the portionless Honoria as a wife. I fear he had quite forgotten it for the last eight and forty hours.

The extreme disorder of his looks confounded Honoria; she felt with woman's instinct that he was on the point of making her a declaration of love: and solicitous to save herself the pain of paining him, she hastened to check the flow of his feelings, by precipitately adding, "I have a dreadfully proud heart, I fear! For that coarse expression of Mr. Frazer's appeared such an air of superiority, that I can never have a cordial intimacy with him; he is now, and always will be, only a clever person

of my acquaintance. It was unpardonable in a Highlander, who knows the superiority of blood even over title. The O'Haras might be considered equal to the Frazers, I think."

Our heroine purposely heightened the offended expression of her voice, to prevent Captain Fitz Arthur from imagining her averseness to the Laird had any thing to do with a preference for himself. A lover is more easily scared than a house-breaker: Fitz Arthur recovered self-possession, with his comfortably habitual notion of being nothing to Miss O'Hara: and he answered her, therefore, with a calm sincerity which will perhaps pique many of my fair readers' laudable *esprit du corps*, far more than it did the vanity of Honoria herself. "If I thought there were one spark of coquetry in your nature, my dear Miss O'Hara," he said, manfully mastering a sigh, "I should know it was vain to plead for indulgence to Mr. Frazer: your own little faultiness would make you jealous of any apology for his self-satisfaction. But I am sure

you erred unconsciously ; and therefore, I am hardy enough to tell you, that he ought not to be given over to utter reprobation."

" And why not ?"

" First, take into consideration his station — his fortune — his habits of life — and his quick open character — these will account for his being easily *assurable*. (May I make a word ?) on the score of his acceptableness, in every way." (Fitz Arthur stammered a little.) " Surely, it is not to the discredit of a man's heart that he is quickly convinced of his fellow creature's good-will ? Next, call to mind the train of pleasant accidents which helped to raise his spirits into exultation. Recollect, Miss O'Hara, he first *observed* you *observing* him."

Honor's cheeks out-damasked the rose at that moment — her eyes fell under their long lashes — and Fitz Arthur fancied that more than the shaded light of those eyes, was glittering through the lashes, and shining like dew upon her blushes.

“Must I go on?” he asked repentingly; “it will be cruel to go on. No, — no, — I cannot go on.” “Do, — do, — Captain Fitz Arthur,” exclaimed Honoria with fervent earnestness. She almost took his hand: she did rest her hand upon his arm a single instant, while arresting his movement to turn away. “I want the truth, however I may wince: tell me the truth as you would tell it to a sister.”

“Well, then — may I venture to say, that to detect a young lady, listening with deep interest to any discourse not addressed to herself, nor about herself, is so uncommon a thing, that I don’t know the man who could resist the temptation of laying a flattering unction to his soul in consequence.”

“O, you hard-judging person!” exclaimed Honoria, desperately mustering all her vivacity to her assistance: “to give it against me, merely for sitting hearkening for ten minutes to a great ill-looking Scotchman, with a loud stamping voice, that I had never looked at or

listened to before. Certes, you lords of the creation are more blessedly to be cheated into a good opinion of yourselves than we your slaves, when such poor oblations as these can win you to think yourselves Apollos!"

"You may make yourself as amusing and charming as you please, Miss O'Hara!" replied Captain Fitz Arthur, his whole soul dissolving in his eyes, as they involuntarily turned and fondly hung upon her; "I shall go on doing my duty, at least so long as you allow me the privilege of calling myself your friend. I have not yet done my catalogue of Mr. Frazer's apologies. You danced with him immediately afterwards: that was a matter of course, so not to be dwelt upon. But he talked again, and talked so well, that he moved your sensibility to a degree which forced you to retire and recover yourself. To start a tear of softness in a woman's eye! — Miss O'Hara, I appeal to your own observation of human nature, if the certainty of having done so, by his eloquence or his sympa-

thy, was not enough to injure the sanity of a man's opinion of himself?—Then the song you chose——”

“O, no more! no more!” interrupted Honoria, putting her hands over her face: “you will quite overwhelm me. I see I must never eves-drop any more, though Shakspeare's ghost were holding forth; and I must always think before I sing, as well as before I speak. Alas! is not that very hard?”

“You do not think lightly of what I have said, for all this playfulness,” said Captain Fitz Arthur, regarding her with the tenderest, fondest longing to catch and hold her to his heart for ever. “You want no knowledge, my dear Miss O'Hara, to fit you for making the happiness of yourself and all around you, except knowledge of the world: as that grows upon you, you will learn the disagreeable necessity of being always vigilant in society, and measuring your degree of unreservedness by your degree of intimacy with your company. Mr. Frazer's fault, in my opinion, has been

want of capacity to discover that you are not a person to be judged by those rules which suit young ladies educated after the same pattern. He *should* have made the discovery the moment he had recommended you to go and hear the nightingale in the South of France."

"Why, what did I say upon that so extraordinary?" exclaimed Honoria, sincerely surprised, and afraid she had committed some distressing blunder. "What could I have said?"

"Why, you neither coloured up, nor looked down; neither frowned nor smiled; in short, you evidently had not found out by his tone and the faces of the company, that Mr. Frazer is himself going to the South of France in Spring."

Honoria could not misunderstand Captain Fitz Arthur; his embarrassed eyes and voice were commentaries on his words; she saw at once what he fancied Mr. Frazer had meant to imply, and her cheeks blazed again.

"In our mothers' childish days," Fitz Arthur resumed hastily, "I believe the

nursery talk used to be of ghosts ; now it seems to be of proposals ; and young ladies are instructed to expect an offer of marriage under every dark compliment ; relations step forth to ask the gentleman what he means, as regularly as divines were formerly summoned to exorcise an apparition. In short, society is haunted by the heartless spirit of establishment."

" Well ! and do you mean to recommend my adoption of such ridiculous fancies as you have just described ?" asked Honoria, a little archly. " Take care, Captain Fitz Arthur, you are beginning to argue against yourself."

Fitz Arthur had certainly confused himself by his haste to relieve her from confusion ; and he was therefore more embarrassed as he replied, — " No ! no ! indeed. I merely meant to describe opinions so different from yours, producing such a different effect upon young ladies' manners, as might bear out my position of Mr. Frazer's being censurable for not discovering that you were not to be judged by the modish laws. I have be-

fore proved to my own satisfaction, if not to yours," he added smiling apprehensively, "that you were guilty of a want of worldly knowledge; that each of you have had your unintentional share in producing that *heinous* exhilaration in the poor Laird which has offended you so much. Is it not fair then, that you should forgive *him*? [and when he comes and complains to me of your refusing his hand—which you will do if he offers it too soon—I will show him he had no right to expect you would accept it."

"Captain Fitz Arthur!" exclaimed Honoria, breaking in upon his last awkward attempt at sportive carelessness, "you think then, that if it is not done too soon—really, I am very much obliged to you for thinking so highly of my taste."

Her tone of good-humoured resentment was not unmarked by Fitz Arthur; it bore the evidence of sincerity: but it was only her taste she vindicated. Not a shade, not a softened turn of countenance whispered any thing about her heart. His heart fell all at once, a dead weight within him.

“Now, don’t you deserve that I should be half inclined to beat you?” asked our heroine, with one of her most bewitching looks: “you find fault with young ladies, taught to do so, for believing too soon in their conquests; and you are grave with me, because I did not, upon six hours’ acquaintance, nay, during the first six minutes of my conversation with the Laird of Dunraven, hedge myself round with all sorts of cautions and cares to keep off a proposal, — as I suppose you would call it! Can you really think I am so silly as to imagine the good man had taken a fancy to me, and a fancy too that he would be thankfully accepted?— To tell you the truth, I thought something worse—no, not worse, but full *as* mortifying; I thought, from that insolent remark of his, about not caring a gowan for Mrs. Meredith, that he considered his mere notice of the minister and his niece an honour to them; such an honour, that he might say unceremoniously whatever came uppermost about their connections. And if any thing that I said had given

warrant to such impertinence, I confess it would humble me for the rest of my life."

"Do not injure yourself, do not humiliate yourself now, by such an idea!" exclaimed Fitz Arthur, his manly features suffused with generous feelings. "Frazer ought not to have thought aloud; at least, he had better have let all the rest of his thoughts, have followed the expression of this unlucky one. If ever I saw a man suddenly and irresistibly struck, he was by you.—Pray pardon my bluntness, Miss O'Hara. And surely, with a serious object in view, after having heard the many ill-natured, unjustifiable—I don't know what fit title to give to Mrs. Shafto's obvious envy—poor Frazer might be allowed to start at first. Afterwards he disdained, you see——"

Fitz Arthur was stumbling more and more over his ill-arranged ideas and expressions; Honoria felt for this embarrassment, his own relative being now a sharer in the animadversions; she rallied him all at once, by exclaiming, "By the

way, my friend, how came you to know all that I said and Mr. Frazer said, from the moment we were introduced to each other? Why, you are worse than a familiar of the Inquisition!"

Never was there a less happy attempt at ridding a man of embarrassment. Captain Fitz Arthur's face was dyed with crimson: nothing but pleading a lover's interest in all her actions, could extenuate *his* impertinence, he thought. Honoria was immediately sensible of the mischief she had heedlessly brought upon herself, and her face became colourless with apprehension.

At this critical instant they were both relieved by the appearance of Mrs. Meredith, issuing from the very back gate by which the walkers were about to enter. Having thrown open this gate, with what housemaids call a *slam*, its force nearly flattened poor Fitz Arthur, who was, however, so closely imprisoned by the sudden action, between that and the wall, as to remain for some time an unwilling listener to what ensued.

Never before had Captain Fitz Arthur been so edified by a shrew's oratory. The current of every man's life appears to have its own particular adornments or deformities. If the stream of Fitz Arthur's had been often troubled, it was not by the tempers of those around him : his trials had other sources. He now listened with astonishment to the violence of Mrs. Meredith.

Miss O'Hara was saluted with a torrent of invective, from which he learned that "dinner at the Rectory had been put back in consequence of Mr. Frazer's visit, and Captain Fitz Arthur's visit ; and then that Miss O'Hara had kept it waiting half an hour longer ; and before they had got it over without her, Mr. Edmund Chaplin had come in for early tea ; and the dinner wasn't fit for a Christian to eat ; the pickled pork was boiled to a jelly : though she *dare say'd*, that if Miss Honor *had* been at home, she would have served her as she always did, when they had good wholesome pork — given herself airs, and eat bread

and butter : but that she must tell her, once for all, she had better take what she could get, and be thankful, for there wasn't one of those men that were coming after her, and making her fancy herself a beauty, that meant her any good — they were all too great gentlemen to think of her as a wife ; all but Mr. Edmund Chaplin ; and him she chose to turn up her nose at ; but she had best take care of herself, or she would be going a gray gait in a misty morning, like Bell Foster, the *set-up* girl before her."

Such an harangue was too much for the heart, the previously agitated heart of Honoria to bear with her usual calmness. She burst into tears, as Mrs. Meredith jerked her violently forward by one arm, exclaiming in a low sobbing voice, " O ma'am, Captain Fitz Arthur hears you !" Her action pointed to the door, behind which she had seen him forced by the violent way in which it was opened.

Mrs. Meredith stood petrified ; then desperately stepping out, pulled the dreaded door aside. Fitz Arthur was

gone. Whether he had adroitly extricated himself during the harangue, or during the moment's suspension of it—how much, or how little he had heard, remains unknown: suffice it, he had disappeared, and not even a rustling of the bushes covering the angle of the wall betrayed his recent flight.

Honorina was so relieved by this flight, and so grateful for it, that she now bore with more than patience, with apologizing sweetness, Mrs. Meredith's increased wrath, at suspecting she had been tricked out of full five minutes' scolding by a feint of her niece's. She maintained that Captain Fitz Arthur had not been behind the door; and bade her go in and say her prayers, and think what was to be the portion of—really, it is impossible to pen down the strong term she used—in the world to come!

Honorina perhaps thought at the instant her aunt could never think of that world. To have uttered her thoughts would have been dropping oil on fire; so she glided silently away in search of her

constant resources on similar occasions — Hetty Macready and the brown loaf.

Honor was like Daniel and his companions; she could feed on pulse and water, and have as fair a face as those that fared sumptuously. While she was eating this wholesome food with unromantic appetite, in spite of foregone agitation and mortification, Hetty Macready found full scope for her fond eloquence.

“Och! and its who but you, Miss Honor! show me the face to *pit* against you; and the manner *on* you; and the *pritty* ways, and the *illigant brading*! — Sorrow to me, if I know where to choose for you, darling!”

“Choose! what for me, Hetty?” asked our heroine, humouring her nurse rather than herself, by thus giving her an opening to speak of her conquests.

“Why, what should I choose but a good husband for you, jewel? *Fait*, and they’re to be had for picking up just now; and would I be the king in your way, rose-bud? och, and I wouldn’t.”

Honoraria laughed. "Just be so good as not laugh, Miss Honor," continued Hetty, drawing up what had once been a rounded slender throat, now, alas! thin and stringy: "haven't I felt the *tinder* passion myself? and don't I know what it is? and an't I sure his majesty came out of the same churn with his subjects? — God bless him! — and just as sure to fall straight in love with you, if he saw you, as all the *oder gintlemen* here. — Bad luck to him if he didn't! say I."

"Hetty! Hetty! you are speaking treason!" exclaimed Honoraria. "But what can have happened to make you run on in this manner?"

"What has happened, darling?" repeated Hetty, brightening up. "Why, hasn't there been a new lover here, *the morn*; and didn't I see the Captain (so she always called Fitz Arthur) take a leap like a young salmon straight down into the *middows*, just as you came in, honey? I warrant me, he was timersome of the rory-tory mistress here. And hasn't there been that beggarly bog-

trotter, Mr. Edmund Chaplin, riding a *baste* I long to *bate*, only *jist* *becase* he rides him? and don't I know there wasn't a *sowl* worth saving at the ball, not a young *gintleman* worth a *rap*, that didn't go mad for you?—Och, botheration! don't tell me, Miss Honor, that you mayn't have the king if you like him!—*Fait*, and I don't know a better *gintleman*, barring his *childer* and his wife. To be sure, her majesty being above ground is a small *objiction*; else I'd give you to him with all the *plisure* in life.—*Howiver*, God bless the queen, though she does stand in your way, jewel!”

“Ah well, Hetty, I see you will never let me marry either of the Messrs. Chaplin,” observed Honoria, with arch gaiety.

“*Fait*, and I'd rather *pit* Paddy's stocking round your beautiful throat, and strangle you, darling!” exclaimed the nurse. “Isn't the youngest one on 'em, a stupid *spalpeen* that don't know how to hand you a potato without burning you? That if you tould him to milk the cow, would go milking the jack-ass.

An awkward *baste*, not fit to carry garbage to a bear! If I *mate* him in the entry, isn't he sure to tread upon my corns? and did I *ivir* see him open the fore-court gate for you, Miss Honor, that he did not *lit* it bang back in your beautiful face? He, the rapsallion! I must beg you won't *mintion* him any more, anyhow."

"But old Mr. Chaplin is getting so rich; his sons will be so rich! Then, there's Mr. Philip Chaplin, the heir. He has half a mind to me. Don't you think I had better give him a little encouragement?"

"Ah, now, darling! Ah, now!" cried Hetty, in the coaxing tone peculiar to her country — a tone which the heart cannot resist, because it so often comes from the heart. "Let that ill-looking vagabond alone, and *jist* hear the affront he *pit* upon me, one day. Och, and by the *sowls* of my *fader* and my *moder*, and ——"

"Hetty, dear Hetty, don't swear."

"Well then, dear, for the *wonst*, *jist*

hear how he behaved. As I was a *litting* him out one night, (though it isn't in my place to wait upon a single *cratur* but yourself; only I did it, out of the civil, to Ned, who was gone after his Sunday hat,) he pretends to tip me with a couple of shabby *testers*. 'There, ould Irish-woman,' says he, 'there's a shilling for you, to speak a good word for me to my sweetheart. You know who I mean.' And with that he winks, and jerks his bit of a head like a little cock-sparrow, — the poor *cratur*! 'Free and *aisy*!' says I, 'but let me tell you, Mr. Chaplin, Miss Honor's not for your money; so *plase* to take it back again:' and with that I tosses it at him. 'Och, and she's for somebody else then,' says he, — the black-guard! and off he goes, as if he had said the witty thing and the wise. A dirty rascal!"

"An impertinent coxcomb!" Honoria almost added: but restraining herself, she gave Hetty one of those little lectures upon calling names, and suffering displeasure to degenerate into abuse,

which poor Hetty's declamations upon certain subjects too often required.

Conscious of deserving reproof, the nurse bore it with good-natured submission of look and spirit: then burst out, all at once on its conclusion, with —

“See the *differ* now of a *gintleman*! Don't you mind when Captain Fitz Arthur got me to stitch up the sleeve of his coat, when he'd tore it one day in trying to get a sheep out of a pit, when I come on him in the *middow* in his distress? See if he even offered me the affront of a *thirteener*, — no, — nor twenty on em! *Blissings* on him, life and limb! He knew the Irishwoman's heart. Sure there isn't a greater *plisure* on earth than to do the civil thing, and the kind!”

“Oh, but Hetty,” cried Honoria mischievously, “you forget the shawl.”

“And *you'd a had* me refuse the shawl, Miss Honor! Hoot-a-toot! Do you know manners? Do you know the *dacent* and the *ginteel*? Sorrow come over you, if you've forgot what Mrs. Ally and I *teached* you in Ballygarry!

See if I shouldn't have broke the Captain's kind heart — and a kinder *niver* warmed waistcoat ! 'Mrs. Macready,' says he, — och, and if he did not know my name from the first hour he set his great handsome eyes on me, as if St. Patrick's self had tould him ! 'Mrs. Macready,' says he, 'you did my poor shoulder *sitch* a *sarvice*, that its but fit you should let me take care of yours, so you must oblige me by wearing this handkerchief for my sake.' Upon which, he whips me out of his great-coat pocket, that beautiful silk shawl from the Chinas ; the shawl that Madam Meredith is *jist* ready to cut my throat for, every time she sees it. Och ! and had you seen the *rispect* of the *cratur* ? With a face like a red turf fire, and his hands trembling like a peat bog !”

“Of course, then, the poor Captain is in love with you, Hetty,” rejoined her provoking foster-child.

“Now, Miss Honor ! — Miss Honor ! — when you know his *affiction* for yourself ! *Niver* stept truer lover on shoe-leather.

But then, he's not an Irishman — och hone ! but that's a sorrow."

"And you won't let me marry Captain Fitz Arthur?" asked Honoria with comic gravity.

"*Fait*, and I don't well know what to say," returned the artless nurse, with as much real trouble of look and mind as if Honoria's fate depended at that moment upon her fiat. "I take vastly to the other gentleman that was here, though he is not so well-limbed and handsome, and open-hearted looking, as Captain Fitz Arthur. But wasn't his grandmother a Caldwell of Carrickfergus? And hasn't he been over all the *ould* places of the giants? And doesn't he believe in *the good people*? And hasn't he seen the *banshee* at Shane's Castle? And didn't he ask me if my husband came of the Macreadys of Ballymoney? *Sure* and he did! And what's more, he *minded* him of the big bleach-ground belonging to Mr. Phelim O'Rafferty, my mother's father's third cousin; and he said the blood of the O'Rafferty's was as

good blood as the Macreadys any day; and that I might hold up my head with the best in Northumberland, barring poverty and serving. And he said you and *him* had been talking of the dear country till you cried, darling; and then you *mentioned* me, and so he bethought to ask for me when you didn't come home. And he said you was the *swatest cratur* ever *sapped* sowings, or washed with buttermilk, let who would be the *nixt*."

Honorina could not restrain a burst of hearty laughter at the eloquent phrases attributed to Mr. Frazer: yet conscious that such mirth offended her doting foster-mother, she said more quietly, "Well, Hetty, and how many more gentlemen will you insist upon my marrying! For I see by your tender concern for all that you fancy fancies your child, she must marry a score at least."

"Sure and I *am* sorry for the *craturs*!" returned the honest-hearted Irishwoman. "There's not a *bigger* pain in the world than love let *me* tell you, that's felt it: and so you'll say *wheniver* you

see the *gintleman* that's to be your fate, as they call it. Didn't I fall straight in love with Murphy Macready the very moment I clapped sight on him — with his roving step and roving eye? — Sorrow on them! Those beautiful black eyes *niver* were made for the good of his sowl! Och! — and many's the heart-ache I had with him, married and single. Miss Honor, dear, *niver* let your fancy run on a man that's lived free. My Murphy had been out with the sodgers, and he could *niver* after that, keep from the ruin of him. Och hone! Och hone!"

Honor's young heart melted at these tones of sorrow, from lips that had so often lulled her infancy to sleep with fondest hushings. She threw herself upon her foster-mother's breast, repeating in her tenderest accents, "Dear, dear nurse — for all his wanderings, I'm sure your handsome husband loved you dearly."

"Ah, jewel, well may you call him handsome! *Niver* was carving or *pictur* like him for the beauty of him. Then

he could talk like ten dozen of angels! You see he came first to me to be *fore-speaker* for Dennis Brady, that had a mind to me then; but instead of that, do you see, *fait* he spoke for himself, *wonst* he had seen me and fancied me, *wild* bit girl as I was! Och, and was I long of saying him yes!”

Hetty's countenance, which had been saddening as she reverted to her past suffering, from her husband's infidelities, lighted again as the vision of his love and comeliness rose in vivid remembrance. For the moment she was eighteen again, and Murphy Macready in the fashion of rustic wooing, with his arm round her waist as they walked under the trees of Ballygarry. Hetty drew one of those deep and fondly laden sighs, rarely heard after five and twenty, and for a while was fixed by melancholy recollections: then, suddenly dashing away the tears blinding her faded eyes, she exclaimed, with the resolute gaiety of her country:—

“And what signifies thinking of the days that's gone, and of them that's

gone, darling? *Pace* to all the *swate* *sowls* on their cold pillows! Och hone! and it's by the time *you* are as *ould* as Hetty Macready, you'll be having some *trisures* in the black church-yard too. I'm thinking I shan't be sorry to be one of them, darling, since I've been *minding* myself of Murphy. *Fait*, and one's happy but the whiles, after one has seen the shroud and the sod put over them we love." The tears ran down the poor widow's cheeks as she spoke, though she smiled too, as Honoria pressed her in her arms, with cheeks as wet as her own.

Honoria could not speak, through sympathy, and natural shrinking from the sure sorrows of coming years; but Hetty Macready bravely rallying her own spirits, and kissing her foster-child's smooth brow, cried out, —

"Now long life to all above ground yet, and may you all survive one another!"

This ludicrous bull caused an instant change in the feelings and thoughts of both; for Honoria was seized with a fit

of uncontrollable laughter ; which, explained to her good-humoured nurse, made her also give way to sudden mirth ; after which, our heroine soon found an opportunity of dismissing her to that active employment, which was always necessary when poor Hetty had been recalling the life and death of her dissipated husband.

Honorina left alone, was left to think of Captain Fitz Arthur principally : to be heartily sorry that he certainly seemed to like her so much better than she desired, — to acknowledge the good sense and good feeling of all he had said to her, — to resolve to profit by it, — and then to let her fancy run upon the little mystery of her knight of the shamrock.

CHAP. V.

CAPTAIN Fitz Arthur was obliged to Mrs. Shafto for his riddance of one rival; Major Stanhope drove from Shafto Place full speed in his tandem, even at the risk of breaking his neck while turning a corner. He went thus hastily, it must be owned, not to fly Miss O'Hara, but the whole file of Misses Shafto, who were forming into a compact body against him.

Providing for the possible failure of her elder girls, the able mother contrived that the sight-seeing party should meet her two youngest daughters walking through Lord Wearmouth's plantations, with their very plain governess. On this rencontre, the really fine hair of the prettiest was admirably displayed, by mamma's disliking the sit of her bonnet, and taking it off to replace it in better style.

Mrs. Shafto was too experienced a general to call attention to the wax-doll head of her Jemima: she simply exclaim-

ed, "What a mop this head is!" As passing her fingers through the thick flaxen curls, she disposed them with more order round the bold red cheeks.

Even this surprise did not take Major Stanhope: he escaped without other loss than that of his first inclination to know more of Miss O'Hara. In justice to our young field-officer, it is, however, right to state, that he yielded up this wish not to the pitiful attempt at degrading Honoria from her rank as a gentlewoman, but to his own constitutional abhorrence of being spied at; to certain notions of duty to his father; and as the mess phrase ran, the fear of being *badgered* by the Shafto Place family; a consequence he saw would be inevitable, did he prosecute any acquaintance at the Rectory.

I am sorry to inform my fairest readers, that very few men indeed are so hardly hit by the most formidable artillery of beauty, on one encounter, as to be unable to draw off their forces at will, and march away in as good order as the Major did. Will they pardon me,

if I add, the fact seems greatly in the nobler sex's favour !

Mrs. Shafto delighted herself with thinking that she had deprived Miss O'Hara of one admirer. Satisfied of that, she generously endeavoured to supply her with another ; and some gracious remarks to their agent, Chaplin, upon the good appearance and pretensions of his sons, together with a gentle hint of where she thought, from certain tokens, one of them might make himself acceptable, and where *connection* might stand in lieu of fortune — (What adverse pictures of Honoria's condition !) — these duly repeated to Mr. Edmund Chaplin, rapidly increased his incipient liking for the pretty Honor O'Hara, (as he was accustomed familiarly to call her, like all other underbred people speaking amongst their intimates, of those they know slightly, and secretly allow to be their superiors,) and at once gave substance and shape to his intentions.

From that hour he became a constant visitor at the Rectory ; and having for-

mally *warned* off his brother, betook himself to win and wear the beauty of Edenfell. His whole plan consisted in duly drinking a certain quantum of tea every evening of her making; as duly pronouncing the said tea, through all its changes from bachelor's essence to husband's cat-lap, "most super-excellent!" regularly being of her opinion upon every subject, however absurdly she might deliver herself, and rarely appearing without some Morocco needle-book, French riband, or gilt scent-bottle, first to offer to Miss O'Hara, then give to Mrs. Meredith. To the latter, these little presents were agreeable indemnifications for all the tea he drank: so he was welcome to her — to Honoria he was insupportable.

Yet Mr. Edmund Chaplin, though bred to the talking and troublesome profession of the law, was a most inoffensive visitor; for he said nothing, unless he was particularly addressed: he belonged, in fact, to that class of silent wooers, of which I believe nearly every agreeable woman has had one, at least, during her

life ; who come regularly to their father's or mother's house every day ; place themselves, what the Scotch term, *right forenent* the object of their admiration ; sitting still, and saying nothing ; everybody as regularly wondering " what can bring that eternal Mr. Smith, or Mr. Thompson to the house !" —till, at length, after two or three years' steady visiting (your silent lovers being always slow ones too) *the brazen head* opens its mouth, and the proposal is made, accepted, or refused.

Mr. Edmund Chaplin was quietly proceeding onward to this point, by dint of evening visits, while a very different personage was aiming at the same object almost every morning.

Frazer of Dunraven regarded not bodily refreshment of any kind ; no, nor confusion of household concerns : so he might but have ingress to Mr. Meredith's reading-room, talk, and once at least during the forenoon, see and seize upon the attention of Miss O'Hara, he was indifferent to every thing else.

By a lucky chance, for it was not the consequence of delicate consideration, Mr. Frazer made his first appearance at the Rectory, not merely to enquire after his partner at the ball, but as the express visitor of its master. He brought some scarce volume, to which he had referred during one of their learned discussions at Arthur's Court, and with which Mr. Meredith was unacquainted. Thus establishing intellectual intimacy with the uncle, he could let his inclination for the niece run on without the necessity of declaring it, either to herself or others, until it was fit time to do so.

Mr. Frazer's well-known passion for research, and the many forenoons he spent solely in settling disputed points, and hunting authorities through all the books he found, and all he brought to Edenfell, gave sufficient colour for his visits, to prevent the servants from saying, and Mrs. Meredith from admitting, the probability of village-gossip being right, when it proclaimed Miss O'Hara as his object. Honoria herself was so awakened

by Captain Fitz Arthur's observations, that although she could not deny herself the pleasure and instruction derivable from listening to the interesting discussions now frequent, where formerly only vulgar wrangling was heard, took care to evince as much interest in her uncle's evident display of erudition, as in the wider information and keener remarks of the Laird.

At once rendered wary of inferences, and indulgent to Mr. Frazer's possible mistakes concerning her, by Captain Fitz Arthur's sincerity, she managed to have the Eolian harp presented to the house rather than to herself. The instrument was found to sound finely only in one particular window, where the wind poured a fuller stream: and though Honoria, after she had heard its thrilling, spirit-like wailing, longed to appropriate it to her own room, still she had the self-denial to denominate the harp a fixture, for which all future occupants of the Rectory would be as surely bound to return thanks to the donor as the present Rector.

Mr. Frazer's hardy sort of love felt no chill from this quiet refusal of his offering. In truth, Honoria had accepted the best part of it, when she went to hear it in full play:—yet how could she, without insolence or affectation, refuse to do so?

As the wind, sweeping all the strings of the harp at the same moment with one wild blast, bore on and carried away sounds to which no music from mortal hand is comparable, either for sublimity or sadness, it seemed to sweep her soul along with it. The colour died and revived in her cheeks—she scarcely breathed—and the rapt attention of her faculties was visible in the fixtude of her eyes.

“Well, what think you of this music?” was the Laird's exulting question. “What does it make you feel?”

Honoria woke as from a trance—“It is like Ossian—like the sea—like being alone among mountains!” was her answer, her heart beating violently, her whole soul too completely roused for the soft luxury of tears. “It agitates too

much — I feel that I must be by myself before I can quite enjoy it !”

What would Fitz Arthur not have given to have heard this declaration ? — it would have laid all his fears of Mr. Frazer to rest. The latter had no perception of what it implied ; but ever ready to oblige Honoria, took Mr. Meredith by the arm, leaving her to solitude, and the harp.

Mr. Frazer was a man of sudden, yet steady purpose ; he was his own master ; he had never been in the habit of considering himself accountable for his actions to any one. Miss O'Hara's countenance and manner made a strong impression upon him at the first glance. By his wanderings round the country, he knew that the clergyman of Edenfell was of a good Yorkshire family, and a scholar into the bargain ; and that his portionless niece came of as good a one on her father's side. Her conversation, or rather as Fitz Arthur suspected, her interest in *his*, fascinated him completely ; and before he had talked to her of nightingales and the South, he had said to himself,

“ This girl shall be my wife.” Mrs. Shafto’s arts to fix his attention upon the aunt’s vulgarity merely made him utter his thoughts too bluntly in consequence ; for Mr. Frazer did not harbour the least suspicion that he might be rejected. A man must be very much in love, or very deeply imbued with the idea of a woman’s delicacy on the subject of marriage, to dream of rejection. Many men (I say it with due deference,) consider women so lightly as to care for no livelier sentiment from them than simple preference ; they ask for no higher qualities in a wife than the capacity of wondering at and believing in *their* superiority. That nobler admiration, which is paid by some similarity of *mental* power, they deem out of the question. For such men, there exists none of those refined gratifications and nobler joys which are so dearly and justly prized by tenderer sensibilities ; for them there is no second, more fondly cherished self, in whom their existence is doubled, their excellencies reflected, their very being heightened into dignity by the con-

sciousness of actuating and blessing that of another.

The chief purpose of Mr. Frazer's visits became soon so evident to Honoria, from certain careless expressions of his, that she spoke at once to her uncle; honestly declaring her inability to bear the idea of giving herself for life to the man of whom, clever as he was, she got tired in half a day. Our heroine was too little experienced in the world to feel or feign the slightest regret at this rebellion of the heart against prudence; and Mr. Meredith was scarcely more inclined than herself to grieve at the loss of so brilliant an establishment for her: he felt the value of her confidence, and willingly promised to lend his aid to her determination of discouraging the Laird's addresses, by refraining from even the ordinary hospitality of pressing his calls upon himself; and he did it the more cheerfully from observing the happy security of Frazer's manner. Mr. Meredith's love had been timid as tender; it was tinged by his character; and so limited was his know-

ledge of human nature, that he could not believe in the existence of a passion without these marks. He was, therefore, loth to give his precious niece to one who he fancied merely admired her as a pretty decoration; and Mr. Frazer was therefore intended to be civilly distanced.

Mr. Frazer easily settled this sudden reserve of the worthy minister's as the result of honest pride, solicitous to avoid the odium of trying to draw him on. Honoria's unvarying conduct was as easily accounted for. The Laird was no further skilled in woman's characters than as the common-places of common books and common talk teach. Women were proverbially shy and sly, and given to *look* no, as well as to say no, when they meant to say yes, after all: so Mr. Frazer went on, haranguing as usual in her presence, every now and then detaining herself and her attention, by force of his vigorous intellect.

Honoria did not lose by such a lover; she gained much valuable information, besides the habit of retracing in her own

mind the events, opinions, or arguments she listened to, analysing their strength or weakness, importance or emptiness, and so habituating herself to correct her own bad taste or false judgments upon other occasions.

She *gained* also the *loss* of Mr. Edmund Chaplin. Mr. Frazer's obvious confidence quelled that of this less fixed character. Conscious of inferiority in every point estimated by the world in general ; such as station, fortune, acquirements ; the wary youth prudently withdrew, without subjecting Honoria to what she would have deemed the humiliation, what *he* concluded she would consider the triumph, of receiving an offer of his hand.

Mr. Frazer, immediately upon Mr. Edmund Chaplin's return to business at York, was looked upon by all the village as Miss O'Hara's declared suitor ; and as since Miss O'Hara's appearance at Sir Everard Fitz Arthur's ball, several of the neighbouring gentry who had not hitherto visited Mr. Meredith now called upon her ; Mrs. Shafto heard on all sides, of

the great match Mr. Meredith's niece was likely to make, in spite of her many disadvantages.

Miss Shafto had just begun to promulgate her unfounded belief of Mr. Frazer's being six and forty instead of six and thirty; Miss Augusta to talk of him as the most tyrannical-tempered man breathing, and consequently to express pity for the poor girl, who must think it her duty to marry him from her *very under* situation; when Mr. Frazer suddenly disappeared from every ordinary haunt—he left the county—he went, without taking leave of any one!

All Edenfell was in amazement, for Miss O'Hara went about as usual, and things went on at the Rectory as usual. Gossips were puzzled—friends posed: the one set feared to extort the secret of Mr. Frazer's refusal, if they were too broad in hints of his having jilted the lady; and the others were honourably left unable to refute the last mortifying assertion.

The plain fact was, that Mr. Frazer

had been refused; and that the uncere-
monious offer he made for her to the
uncle, after being referred to herself,
was known only to those three persons.

At first the Laird was incredulous of
Honor's rejection, though made to him
by herself. He would not hear of his
visiting no more at the Rectory, except
as her uncle's visitor; — he laughed at
her *demure airs of earnest*, as he styled
her repeated assurances that she could
not regard him as he wished — then bade
her be a little less womanish and fantas-
tical, and tell him honestly that she would
have him. It was quite impossible, in
Mr. Frazer's opinion, that she should
prefer living on, in a dull corner of
England, with a vixen of an aunt that
worried her every day, as furious dogs do
a kitten, to marrying a man who was not
thought the stupidest fellow in the world,
and who would carry her all over the
world if she liked it, and give her be-
sides every woman's nonsense she might
set her heart upon.

In answer to this harangue, Honoria

repeated her refusal, together with certain conclusive arguments against Mr. Frazer's secret certainty that "she would marry him after all." She cared for no luxuries, no pomps, no vanities his fortune offered; and in lieu of his really informing conversation she could seek books. She preferred the liberty of singlehood — nay, its very insignificance, to the awful duties and necessary thralldom of matrimony, unless those duties and that bondage were rendered precious to her, by the *most devoted admiration* of, and *spontaneous attachment* to, her lord and companion.

The Laird would fain have argued the point, in the proud hope of being victorious both as a lover and a disputant; but Honoria's demeanour, and steady repetition of his sentence, put it out of his power to proceed. He was silenced for five minutes at least; then respectfully taking her hand, and submissively touching it with his lips, he honoured his own nature by seeking no quarrel with hers.

He confessed that he knew nothing of

women's characters — that he perceived he was quite ignorant of the way of making himself agreeable to them — but that he should do Miss O'Hara the justice to say, she had always tried to get out of his company, ever since the first evening of their acquaintance ; so that he had nothing to accuse her of. It was all his own fault, for fancying women never meant what they said or did in matters of such a kind. In short, he was a very unfortunate fellow, since he must give her up at the precise moment she had made herself still more the object of his respect and admiration. He was ashamed now that he had talked to her of jewels, and carriages, and such stuff, as he had been told, won every woman's heart.

It might be said of Mr. Frazer's passion, as it was of Wolsey's life, " Nothing in his love became him like his leaving it." He spoke with feeling and sincerity ; and the softness of the sentiment by which he was suffering, took away its usual roughness from his frank honesty.

Honorina was touched : and *now* she

could express gratitude for the preference it was impossible for her to return. Before this, her pride was up in arms. She renewed her hope that they were not to lose Mr. Frazer's society as a friend.

Frazer with some emotion told her he could not remain where he was — he must be off somewhere — busy himself in something quite new, till he should forget her — which he feared would take him a desperate long time to do — and after that, perhaps, he might try how he could stand meeting her again. He only hoped she might soon find the man to her mind; for if once she was married he must be satisfied.

With this really worthy sentiment, which Honoria's romance deemed a very strange one for a lover, the Laird departed in search of Mr. Meredith. His own short story told, and friendly assurances exchanged, they separated; — Mr. Meredith charged with a round of civil messages to all Mr. Frazer's Edenfell acquaintance, — and Frazer himself departing with the feeling truly in his

heart, which he had just uttered by his lips; namely, that he cared not who knew *why* he went so abruptly. He had wished to marry Miss O'Hara, and he had gone so often to her uncle's, that people must either think he had behaved like a scoundrel, or been refused; and he would far rather be known to have no talent for making love, than be set down for an accomplished male flirt.

The sentiment was too honourable to be acted upon by those whom it empowered to justify themselves from the humiliating suspicion of having been treated contumeliously. Mr. Meredith and his niece preserved a generous silence on the subject of Mr. Frazer's proposal; but they never varied in their cordial mention of his talents and good qualities.

Mrs. Meredith triumphed at home by perpetual invectives against her niece for having suffered Mr. Edmund Chaplin to slip through her fingers, while trying to catch one who would not be caught; and abroad she railed at Mr. Frazer, for coming as much to the Rectory as if it

were his own house, and then going off without thanks or present to her.

During great part of Mr. Frazer's reign at the Rectory, (for every house he lived much at, he lorded over — its opinions at least,) Captain Fitz Arthur was absent upon family business, which he had found it particularly convenient for him to execute at that time. On his return to Arthur's Court, the Laird of Dunraven was gone. He guessed his fate; and at that moment he could afford him a sigh of sincere commiseration.

His own prospects, however, were not bettered by Frazer's removal. He was quite sure that at present he himself was an object of indifference to Miss O'Hara; and he despaired of ever having it in his power to endeavour at exciting that tender interest in her breast, without obtaining which, life seemed as if it could have no charms for him.

In addition to his father's involved property, there were duties which, to fulfil properly, must clog his own actions

through the whole season of manhood and middle age.

To make the most out of Hylton's frail constitution that could be made, was one of these duties; to rectify the more serious injury done to his younger brother's mind and temper, by excessive indulgence at home and injudicious treatment at school, was another. To the performance of these, Fitz Arthur must devote money, time, and assiduity; he must therefore give up the army, and perhaps give up a wife.

Fitz Arthur had reflected again and again upon the right, and the practicable, and the rational, in his own case. He aimed at no theatrical effects in his conduct; he coveted no praise for heroism; he would far rather have had no sacrifice to make: but when good sense and good principle told him one ought to be made, he determined on it immediately. He decided that it would be wrong in him to return to India; nay, even to remain in the army,—he must sell out, and be-

take himself to the sober life of a country gentleman.

By so doing he would be enabled to act for his father, without appearing to do so; he would be at hand, to keep their new system of prudent expenditure and regular liquidation going steadily forward, and be able also to put a timely stop to fresh impositions upon Sir Everard's good-nature.

By such means, the heir of Arthur's Court might be privileged, after a few years, in thinking of Miss O'Hara. But Miss O'Hara would, long ere that, have seen and been seen by the man formed to captivate her heart and her imagination. There could be no hope for Fitz Arthur, then, except her affections were previously engaged to him. To attempt such engagement, generosity, nay, even love forbade. Fitz Arthur truly loved — prizing the happiness of Honoria far, far beyond his own. “I must not think of such felicity as that of being her husband; I must not repine that she is never likely to be mine!” Such was his musing, com-

muning with himself, as he paced the picture-gallery at Arthur's Court. "I must not allow myself to think — My lot is a little hard — All those whom these dumb memorials represent have had wife, children, grandchildren, to love and to lament them ; while I must live and die unloved, unloving, sad, and solitary !"

Fitz Arthur checked himself — not from shame of his own impudent assertion, made in the very faces of several persons qualified to contradict him ; for some had died bachelors, and others had lived miserable husbands — but from remorse at his ingratitude to Heaven, and his injustice to the living : he thought of poor Hylton's fate, and of his affection ; of friends in distant lands ; of neighbours and servants close at hand ; of his father's affectionate devotion to his better judgment.

"I am an unworthy wretch !" he exclaimed ; "I will not complain of my lot ; it has many sweeteners — and it might be so much embittered ! — Good God ! it may still be so !"

At that moment an object flashed across Fitz Arthur's thoughts, which had of late often occupied them, to the exclusion of every cheering image—it was a person whom he had never seen, but had twice heard of accidentally, without knowing who he was, or why he came to Sir Everard.

There were some circumstances attending this person's appearance which caused a most grievous suspicion — grievous indeed, to a son who would willingly have believed his father incapable of any one act that could lessen a child's reverence — he suspected this person to be an illegitimate son of Sir Everard's.

Of the existence of such a brother, Fitz Arthur certainly had never heard; but that was no evidence against strong presumptions in support of the disgraceful suspicion.

Since the necessary examination of his father's circumstances, our heir had found several large sums unaccounted for, which, when he naturally reverted to them, Sir Everard begged might not

be further questioned ; and lately, another unaccounted sum had disappeared from their banker's book.

Fitz Arthur knew that his father was no gamester, and that all his present expenses at Arthur's Court were regulated by the plan laid down by his son, and left subject to his scrutiny. How, then, could this last sum be spent? After his son's return, Sir Everard, in the fulness and unforeseeingness of his heart, had shown him every letter he wrote or received : till one day he failed in a single instance.

As Fitz Arthur rather sought to avoid this habitual confidence, lest his father should at last feel it a sort of duty, he would have been pleased with the incident now under review, had not Sir Everard thrust this letter into his pocket with an air of confusion, and begun talking about something else, with a volubility quite unusual. Delicacy forbade the expression, even of a son's curiosity ; and the incident passed from his mind ere the day concluded.

A week afterwards, as they were sitting at breakfast, Sir Everard's Swiss servant entered, and whispering something to his master, Sir Everard got up hastily and left the room. Soon afterwards, he sent a message to say he was engaged, and begged Mrs. Fothergill might not wait for him.

When the father and son met at dinner that day, the former answered the latter's natural question of whether his morning occupation had been about any business in which he could assist him, by a few evasive words, immediately shifting the discourse; his son was too respectful to repeat his enquiry. But shortly afterwards, discovering the diminished fund at their banker's, he put the two circumstances together, and had his own painful surmises in consequence.

One of Fitz Arthur's retrenching acts was to do without a personal servant; there were some little offices, however, which his father's old Swiss insisted upon performing for him: and during the performance of these offices, Wilhelm had

opportunities of hinting his knowledge of some secret unknown to his young master. Wilhelm had more than once spoken of "cruel drains still upon his honoured master's kind heart:" coupling this with certain grave remarks about "children born in sin, always living to become shames:" adding, "that it was all right and good to give natural sons education, but it should not be like gentlemen — to give them thoughts above themselves, and so bring them to ruin. He should cast no reproaches upon a poor lady in her grave, but he was very sorry for his master."

Captain Fitz Arthur saw that the old man, grateful for his re-instatement at Arthur's Court through his means, wanted only a little encouragement to divulge the whole matter, to one whom he believed had some right to know it. But Fitz Arthur knew a son's duty too well to tamper with a domestic for the sake of acquiring a knowledge of what his father chose to withhold; he, therefore, endeavoured to stop these insinuations,

without wounding the poor man's feelings. Wilhelm's intention was good ; he was only mistaken in the means he used.

The Swiss silenced and cautioned, Fitz Arthur revolved in his mind whether he ought or ought not to speak to his father upon the subject, which he concluded must be Wilhelm's secret. If such a being existed, as a brother of such birth, breeding, and habits, as Wilhelm hinted, it seemed incumbent upon him, for his other brothers' sakes, to enquire into this unfortunate one's character and pursuits. Yet how to wring such a humiliating confession from his father ! A father, already too much humbled by the consciousness of indiscretion and profusion !

With the only cowardice which can belong to a good heart — the fear of giving pain, Captain Fitz Arthur deferred this enquiry from day to day, till the very morning we are now intruding upon his solitude : when walking up and down the picture gallery with his father, their cheerful converse was interrupted

by the entrance of Wilhelm, who coming up close to Sir Everard, whispered something like "That gentleman, sir." Left alone immediately, it is not surprising that a man of Captain Fitz Arthur's character, by whom virtue and reputation were considered the finest inheritances, should fall into melancholy ruminations. He sought to arrest his thoughts from his father's secret, and the act carried them to his own. He remembered every look and word that had ever charmed him from Honoria; and he could recollect no argument in favour of indulging the tenderness such remembrance awakened.

Fitz Arthur was from principle an enemy to fruitless musings, inclined, as he was, by a poetical taste, and a love-cherishing heart, to the dangerous practice. At present he found himself in that state of nervous dispiritedness, which sometimes renders even the strongest mind powerless; and conscious, therefore, that his continued rumination must grow into something worse than idling,

he had just sufficient vigour left to rouse himself and go into the air.

The next moment he was out upon the honeysuckle walk, as the terrace behind the house was called. It was a fine spring day; and a confusion of nameless sweet smells came on his sense with the "nimble air." Scarcely any flowers were yet blowing in the garden; but the sweetbriar hedge was out, and a passing shower had just called forth its quickening scent.

Fitz Arthur descended the steps of the terrace, and having studiously set himself to inspect the state of some tulip roots, which he had put into the ground himself to please his brother Hylton's taste, he left it, to speak with some labourers beyond.

After fetching a compass round what remained of the park, he was returning by its inner line to the house, with a large handful of sow thistles for his invalid's pet rabbits, when he heard an angry voice calling to some boy, *to mind what he was doing*: coupling the exhort-

ation with a hearty curse. At such unusual sounds in his father's demesne, Fitz Arthur involuntarily stopped. A gap in the fence gave him a full view of the youngster addressed, of the horse he was bid to take care of, and of the speaker. The latter, a well-dressed handsome man, about thirty, was standing, carefully examining a parcel of notes in a pocket-book.

Ere this person had closed the pocket-book, and mounted his horse, Fitz Arthur had completely surveyed him. The face, he thought, was that of a determined, thorough-paced scoundrel : — the features were regular, — the countenance bad. It had a peculiar hardness of expression, in addition to a certain sensual grossness, indicative of a nature which would have its own gratification at any price ; and like the horrible *Egalité's*, would be ready to purchase the enjoyments of a brute by the acts of a fiend.

Fitz Arthur's blood ran cold as he looked on this man, and heard his loud

startling voice again say, as he threw a piece of money to the boy, "There, d—— you!" He did not doubt that this was the person whose history Wilhelm appeared so anxious to instruct him in; he must be his brother, then.

As the conviction sank upon Fitz Arthur's heart, a set of horrible probabilities in this man's career, past and to come, rose on the instant before him. Every possible degree of low vice and shameless depravity:—forgery, murder, outlawry, suicide, nay, the very gallows, seemed to him written in legible characters on his dark and sinister brow. A cold dew gathered over that of poor Fitz Arthur, — he stood for many, many minutes in death-like stillness: then turning abruptly away, he said in a tone of agony, "True! true! what have I to do with happiness?"

The stern misery of his mind allowed not of tears: but his heart was wrung for his only parent. Disgrace and dishonour, nay, total ruin perhaps, might

be the portion of his father's old age. At that moment what a sermon Fitz Arthur could have preached to every libertine!

He turned out of the demesne, and striking into a wood skirting the road, endeavoured, while wandering there, to settle his disordered thoughts, and reconcile the jarring wishes and resolutions of every second instant.

Now it was that Fitz Arthur felt all the value of what he was resigning for his family — for what a relief it would have been to selfish sensibility, could he have gone immediately to his regiment, and there plunged at once into the business of his profession! But duty and affection commanded him to remain where he was. He must now stand forth to protect, if not his lawful inheritance, at least the comforts and rights of his young brothers. It was evident this man was making spoil of these; and if his system of secret robbery were suffered to go on, their father's weakness might be

worked upon to their complete destruction. There was no path, then, for a son to take with honour to himself, except the direct one. He determined, therefore, upon speaking to Sir Everard that very day.

Amidst the bitterness of these ruminations, there was some consolation to Fitz Arthur — the solitary one of thinking, from the apparent age of the reprobate, that he must have been born three or four years previous to their father's first marriage. Had it appeared a later event, even the tenderest of sons, the most lenient of judges, felt he could not have forborne a word, or look of reproach — a mother's memory is so sacred! Resting his thoughts upon this single consolatory point, and aware that, to execute his painful and delicate task, he must be in full self-possession, he quitted the wood, with all its wild spring flowers of unheeded sweetness, and rambled in a wider direction; endeavouring to give salutary refreshment to his spirit by stopping

every now and then to talk with the farmers, and notice their children.

After all, there was no better cordial he knew of, for a sick heart, than the sight of dear Mrs. Preston's kindly smile, and the sound of her welcoming voice. He went therefore to Hazeldean.

CHAP. VI.

IT was the last day of March. One of those soft sunny days which, coming immediately after a long succession of frosts, storms, rains, and east winds, takes us by an agreeable surprise, like an unexpected and welcome guest, spreading gladness over every countenance.

Mrs. Preston and one of her daughters were literally idling to enjoy it; they were sitting under one of those large stone porches, common to old farmhouses, and which still remained at Hazeldean, by way of support to the rose-bushes that grew against and climbed over it.

As yet there were only leaves on the rose-trees, and those but unfolding: however, the fruit-trees made amends for their deficiency. The cherry, — the plum, — the almond, were all covered with blossoms: even the currant-bushes,

with their flowers of delicate and doubtful green, gave a smilingness to the scene, and added humbly to its sweets ; a few ground-bees were seen hovering among the ivies that clothed a standing fragment of the ruined abbey, allured thither by the sunshine and the blossoms ; and the clear note of the blackbird was heard at intervals breaking through his thick covert of hazel copse. Mrs. Preston's loveable aspect seemed reflecting the sunshine and the amenity of all around her ; whilst her daughter Bella sat, in happy vacancy of thought or expression, by her side, listening, not attending, to the gay chat of two young ladies and their handsome brother, who were unluckily quizzing one another, about some home-jest that had nothing to do with fashion.

Honorina was one of the Hazeldean party ; but she was sitting out on a bench at a short distance, under the shade of an ancient yew, now almost as shattered and venerable as the ruin itself : her hat was lying on the ground, (its crown stuffed with violets,) and her uncovered

head bent over a thin quarto she was intently reading. The volume bore all the marks of a new publication, such as a blue paper back, and a ragged edging of very white leaves, evidently torn asunder by hasty fingers.

“Don’t trouble yourself to speak to Miss O’Hara,” said the young man in the porch, seeing Fitz Arthur make an involuntary halt, as he was passing her. “She is *rapt* just now, as our friend Miss Dulcy would say if she were here. You know, Mrs. Preston, I quiz the fair *dulcibella* now and then, upon her fine phrases.”

“What is Miss O’Hara’s study?” asked Fitz Arthur of herself, in a voice still tinged with melancholy.

“O pray don’t speak to me : let me finish this lovely ballad,” was her reply, without once looking up. Fitz Arthur sighed unconsciously, and passed on ; he sat down beside Mrs. Preston in silence ; but Fitz Arthur had the knack of making his silence say something, when he thought it right to do so ; and now the

sweet complacency with which he first eyed the garden, then rested his soft regards upon Mrs. Preston herself, spoke sufficiently. The gentle smile accompanying both actions expressed satisfaction.

“ Did you ever see such a foolish lassie ? ” asked the motherly mistress of Hazeldean, “ to sit poring over that book, when we have such a day as this ! I don’t think she has said ten words to us, since Mr. William here, gave her the sing-song thing. ”

“ Poetry ! — and what is the volume ? ” asked Fitz Arthur, merely for the sake of forcing himself into conversation.

Mr. William Mulcaster did not require to be asked twice for information. “ O, it is miscellaneous, — love, glory, — death and despair, — sonnets and elegies, — odes and ballads, — a first production. By Jove, a capital one ! — anonymous though ; but I know who he is, an old Eton friend. — All London is talking of the book : everybody reading it, — buying it, — begging it, — borrowing it, —

stealing it. In short, there has not been such an uproar about pen and ink craft, since the days of Junius."

"Miss O'Hara is then singularly lucky to get the book, without committing any enormity for it," observed Fitz Arthur, aiming at a little playfulness, to resist his own blue devils. "The writer conceals his name; but you say, you know him: Do you think he deserves his reputation?"

"He is as much admired as his book, I can tell you, wherever he goes. A monstrous fine figure," (Mr. Mulcaster was a careless speaker for a college-man,) "noble air of the head, — eyes that look you through in no time, — and, out and out, the best private actor, and the best mathematician in Europe."

Honoria's eyes were now off her book, and fixed on the speaker.

"Your friend's talents take a wide range, it should seem," observed Fitz Arthur, still manfully rolling up the conversation, or it would have fallen back upon him, a dead weight, — "has he any profession?"

“Only that of a fine gentleman,” replied Mulcaster, with good-humoured levity, — “the snuggest profession going. Let me tell you, he is one of our leaders in that line, for all he dabbles in rhyme-tagging. When he was at Oxford, all our *crack* fellows used to dress after him : so they do now in London ; and, as to women’s hearts, he mows them down by dozens.”

“No wonder !” said Fitz Arthur, “with such notable weapons as you describe — figure, eyes, acting, and mathematics ! It is a pity he does not use them to a better purpose.” Fitz Arthur spoke with a tincture of austerity unusual to him ; it was not directly meant at this unknown poet ; it arose from the morbid state of distaste to mere pleasure-hunting society, in which his late reflections had placed him ; and, recollecting himself, he added, “a genius for the sweetest and sublimest of arts would of itself make a man dangerous to a sex so much more susceptible of fine impressions than ours. So I must hope your friend is as merciful as he is mighty.” Then observing

Honorio's attention directed from her book to their dialogue, he confusedly uttered a wish of being permitted to judge of the new poet, by her reading one of the poems aloud.

"O no!" she exclaimed; "I have just finished one, and you shall read us the next." Rising as she spoke, she came into the porch, and held out the volume to him.

Fitz Arthur took it in silence; and after a few instants given to calm certain flutterings of his heart, read with unaffected variety and sweetness of voice, a desultory poem, merely entitled "Musings," in which were many faults and some beauties: both the faulty and the better passages deeply tinged with a sadness, which harmonizing with the existing feelings of the reader, bribed him into approbation.

When he concluded, Honorio who had been listening to him like one entranced, (though ungratefully mindless of the beautiful medium through which the poetry was transmitted,) was for a long

time lost in the attempt at recalling all her favourite passages : and quite unconsciously, repeated audibly, with deeper pathos, and softer tones, than even Fitz Arthur had done, some of the lines lingering on her ear : —

“ There, Memory wanders through her leaf-strewn
paths,
Heark'ning the many echoes of the past ;
Which, or from ruin'd hall, or lonely tomb,
Or human voice dear loved, with mournful sound
Knells on her widowed heart ! ”

“ That is so lovely ! ”

Fitz Arthur's eyes filled with tears, as hers seemed to ask for sympathy with their admiration. He was thinking of his brother Hedworth ; he turned away his head. Honoria had never before thought Fitz Arthur's eyes so finely expressive : hers were yet resting on him, with newly awakened interest, when he looked round again. The expression of her face threw him into fresh disorder ; it was a moment or two before he could speak : he tried to articulate steadily, whilst observing, —

"Yes, that passage struck me while reading it. Perhaps, from my unprofitable habit of thinking more of the past, than is either wise or worthy, in one that has a present and a future to live in."

"Nay, but this passage," interrupted Mr. Mulcaster, unceremoniously snatching the volume out of Fitz Arthur's hand, and loudly declaiming, —

" ' Strange was that fated night! the granulous
shower

Rang on the earth, ice-paved; its hollow sound,
Like rain metallic: prone at once it fell,
Unwaved by wind. But ever and anon
Long roll of distant thunder mutter'd far
Among the embattled clouds; and lightnings flash'd:
Sounds, deep and dire, came from the ocean caves;
Though neither blast swept their dark depth,
Nor living thing within, wail uttered!—
O, 'twas a night to quail the ——' "

"No horrors, — no horrors!" interrupted Miss Preston. "I do assure you, Mr. Mulcaster, horrors are going out. Mr. Lewis and all his ghosts and monks are to be quite out of fashion before this season ends."

“ With all my heart ! ” exclaimed Mr. Mulcaster, “ only listen to my favourite here : the subject *must* please you ladies.” And clearing his voice with three preparatory hems, in the true style of set-reading ; he went see-sawing through the following stanzas. It was impossible to decide whether Mr. Mulcaster read in jest or in earnest.

“ *Composed on the Beach at ———.* ”

“ Here, where sands of ocean lie
Smooth beneath the azure sky,
Scarcely mark'd, yon tide draws nigh ;
Like unseen love.

Sparkling in the joyous sun,
See its emerald waves come on,
Murmuring music as they run ;
Like whispering love.

“ Now with kissings soft, they lave
Level beach and pebbly cave,
Rilling back each glassy wave ;
Like half-check'd love.

“ Yet, from each receding low,
Farther streams their onward flow,
Rising fast, though seeming slow ;
Alas ! like love.

“ Higher heaves the strengthen'd tide,
Swifter now its volumes glide,
Deeper, though they spread more wide;
Still, still like love.

“ Lo ! the flat sands disappear,
Ripples into billows rear,
Foaming high, yet glittering clear ;
Like bolder love.

“ On they rush, with foam and flash,
O'er the shoals and inlets dash,
Covering each with joyous splash;
Like conquering love.

“ All that on that varied shore
Soothed or charm'd the sense before,
Lies at once deep flooded o'er ;
Like hearts by love !”

As various as the humours of the audience, were the opinions given of this trifle.

Miss Bella pronounced it *in good taste* ; both the Misses Mulcaster “thought it must be very descriptive and very just ; but they could not say : they were not qualified to judge of its fidelity. (Laughing and blushing all the while.) William indeed was quite competent ; for every

body knew—" Here they laughed again, and whispered something to Miss Preston, in which the name of a certain Lady Catherine was audibly mixed. Miss Bella's ears visibly stretched at the sound.

Mrs. Preston declared the verses were better than most things about love, for there was nothing dismal in them.

Mr. Mulcaster avowed his unqualified approbation ; hinted at his sympathy with all lovers ; talked of lurking wishes, and ambushed Cupids,— of passions like pick-pockets, robbing men before they were aware ; then raved off in admiration of sundry blazing odes, in which the lover was described as stricken instantaneously by the lightning of beauty: in fact, proving to demonstration, that as yet, Mr. William Mulcaster knew nothing of love, either as a sentiment or as a passion.

Captain Fitz Arthur managed to say nothing. Honoria, who alone of all the company had never been or fancied herself in love, spoke in her usual spirit of frank remark. She owned the awful subject was wholly speculative with her ;

and laughingly wondered what shape the disease would take in her when her turn came: she could only say, she thought herself more likely to be struck all at once, than to be stolen upon.

“ Ay, ay, Honor, child, so you say,” interrupted Mrs. Preston, laying her hand on Honoria’s arm with motherly freedom. “ Yet for all this, you may be heart-over in that deep sea, even now, without your knowing it. Few persons find out they are in that treacherous water till they are within an inch of their lives; and then it is too late, as Mr. William’s friend writes.”

A glance from Mrs. Preston’s frankly laughing eye, had so effectually turned away Captain Fitz Arthur’s at this moment, that he lost the opportunity afforded him of seeing how Miss O’Hara looked when an allusion was made to a *possible* — oh, no, he feared — an *impossible* latent feeling for himself. He trembled lest his old friend’s adventurous remark should have the effect of chilling Honoria’s manner, or of drawing forth

some killing answer. Honoria, however, had covered momentary embarrassment, by regaining the new publication; and now suddenly exclaimed, —

“ Oh, Mr. Mulcaster, you said the writer had not put his name to his work; why, here it is, in the title-page: and who do *you* think it is?” she added, turning with animation upon Fitz Arthur.

Never did her brilliant eyes sparkle more brilliantly, never did her countenance glow with more light and beauty, never did her clear voice ring with more silvery sweetness!

“ Who can it be?” asked Fitz Arthur eagerly, anxiously.

“ Hear the title!” she resumed, — ‘Feelings and Fancies, by Peter Gubbins, Esq.’ Alack, what an unpoetical name! But my knight of the sham-rock.”

“ ‘What’s in a name? It is nor hand nor foot!’” Mr. Mulcaster started off with; quoting Romeo or Juliet, in his capacity of lover.

“ Mr. Peter Gubbins!” reiterated Cap-

tain Fitz Arthur, in a tone of greater surprise, nay emotion, than Honoria thought the occasion justified. "*Is your friend the author of this book. I mean the gentleman who was at Arthur's Court a month or two ago? But you were away then.*"

"The same, the identical same," replied Mr. Mulcaster; "Raby told me afterwards."

"Then your friend is one of the strangest persons I know," returned Fitz Arthur. "I wish he would leave off going about the world as he does, masquerading in private as well as in public."

"Ah, ha! I see you *do* know him!" exclaimed Mr. Mulcaster, and a look of intelligence then passed between him and Fitz Arthur. Honoria saw there was a mystery. The Misses Mulcaster were clamorous for explanation; both spoke in one breath, — "O do tell us, Captain Fitz Arthur! Do tell us of what profession Mr. Peter Gubbins is, — and who he belongs to, — and where he comes from. William is so close and cross."

“Be quiet, girls! hands off, I tell you!” cried their brother, shaking off the young ladies as they tried to pull him away, and get possession of Captain Fitz Arthur. “I protect Fitz Arthur! Mind your own little business, and don’t pry into state secrets; go on jabbering about your ribands and rebuses, and leave us lords of the creation to a snug confabulation of our own.”

“Ah, now! dear William! — Darling William! —”

“Avaunt, ye bell-clapper fiends!” exclaimed their good-humoured but resolute brother. “I tell you, ye shall know no more of Mr. Peter Gubbins than that he wears a green shade, and writes books. Whether he sweeps the streets for his pastime between whiles, or scribbles as a scrivener, becometh not me to tell you. Away, slight things!”

“Well then, this I am sure of,” laughed Sophia Mulcaster, “that your friend is a fright with red eyes. Faugh! nauseous!”

“That *I* know he is not!” thought Honoria, who not choosing to be one of

the jostled off querists, quietly betook herself to the book again.

“O now, I know all about him!” suddenly exclaimed Jane Mulcaster. “Don’t you remember, Sophy, when William was staying at Lord Sarum’s, he came home raving of a monstrously clever, agreeable young man, an architect who had been studying in Italy and Greece, and was brought to Lord Sarum’s by Lord Francis Fitz James? And —”

“O mercy, yes!” interrupted Sophia. “William said he was such a genius, that it was a pity he was not exactly one of their set. O! I remember his being so sorry that his father was only a hop-merchant; — yes, yes, this is the man I am sure.”

“Sweet simpletons! Darling innocents!” exclaimed Mr. Mulcaster. “So you have set it down in your wisdom, that a genius for building houses, and building the lofty rhyme, is one and the same thing! — go to! chatterers!”

But the sisters were not to be so easily put off; they persisted in accumulating

reasons for the writer of Feelings and Fancies being the identical architect; who, although the son of a dealer in hops, was, by favour of divine genius, voted *presentable* in *good society*. They maintained that nothing was so natural, therefore, as his very proper shyness at Arthur's Court; he must so dislike owning his father's ignoble trade!

Nothing could be made out of Mr. William Mulcaster's shake of the head: it might have as many versions as the memorable one of Lord Burleigh. He accompanied it with the highly flattering exclamation of, "two regular missy girls!" And immediately commenced a short dialogue with the unwilling Fitz Arthur, in whispers.

Honorina, meanwhile, was poring and pondering over her book, — endeavouring to settle, whether the son of a hop-merchant were entitled to precedence of the son of a law-agent? and whether Mr. William Mulcaster's provoking manner, did not indicate that his poetical and building friend were one and the

same person? — Something within her, either prepossession or plain sense, told her that mind and morals were the real objects of her respect; — and that if either of the Messrs. Chaplin had been suspected of as much of the first quality, as was attributed to the obscure Gubbins, and not known to be so deficient in the other as report made them, their origin might have been a bar, but not an impassable one to her favour.

In the midst of these thoughts, Captain Fitz Arthur approached her, — he begged to look again at the volume which he confessed had now a new interest for him, since he found it was written by her knight of the shamrock. Honoria relinquished the book.

Whilst he slowly turned over its leaves, she appeared listening to a lecture of Miss Preston's, upon a threatened fashion of open sandals instead of shoes; which the latter declared, was on the point of becoming general, having appeared upon the modish feet of a certain duchess. The fair Bella's concluding exclamation

of, "and *quelle goutte elle met dans les habits!*" was lost upon our heroine. Observing Fitz Arthur's eye going several times over the same page, she turned towards him, enquiring which of the little poems was distinguished by such repeated use?

"I fear I was not considering it with so much approval, as—" Fitz Arthur hesitated, he spoke with some emotion—"as—yet it interested me. Tell me what you think of it."

Honoraria had not come so far in the volume as this little piece, from which she could, in truth, make out very little sense, and less poetry: she now read it with keen curiosity. The writer seemed purposely to have made it the vehicle of some private feeling: and was evidently too solicitous about expressing that feeling clearly, for one particular person's apprehension, to attempt clothing it in rich or beautiful imagery.

The substance of more than a dozen stanzas may be summed up, in saying, that they contained only a lover's re-

proaches to his mistress for refusing to become his wife ; accusing her, (in addition to some regard for wealth and pleasure,) of sacrificing their mutual wishes to overstrained notions of duty ; and ending, by the prophecy, first of his own death, and then of her eternal wretchedness, in consequence of that event.

Departing from her usual custom, Honoria, after having read these verses, did not immediately pronounce an opinion. Fitz Arthur had to enquire what she thought of them.

“ In truth, I don't know,” was her hesitating reply. “ They seem to want a key : they refer to some situation I can but guess at. However, they make me pity the writer.”

“ I fear they make *me* pity only the person to whom they are addressed, whoever she may be,” was Fitz Arthur's answer.

“ Pity *her* !” echoed Honoria. “ Why, is not she described as a heartless creature, preferring grandeur to domestic happiness !”

“The poet accuses her, certainly ; but, I think only of high-strained virtue. His quarrel with her seems to be, that she has suffered some powerful principle, or, if you will, some sanctified prejudice, to control her actions and condemn her to singlehood. You observe he does not accuse her of preferring another : he has the vanity to believe in the eternity of her attachment to himself, and the barbarity to triumph in it. I cannot, therefore, sympathize with his feelings. Is there not something savage in the threatened punishment at the end of the poem ?”

“Yes, if he really wished her so punished,” returned Honoria, clinging to her prepossession ; “but surely some allowance is to be made for surprised and outraged sensibility. Would it not be sufficient to madden a saint, to find a woman so inconsistent as to profess attachment, yet refuse competence with the man she professed it to, because he has not positive riches. This is what I understand from these verses.”

“ I grant it,” replied Fitz Arthur gently ; “ nay, I will allow as much as you please to the infirmity of nature, even in less justifying circumstances—to sudden agony and momentary phrenzy—all this, uttered in plain prose, under a paroxysm of disappointment, I might have overheard, or even witnessed, yet have deeply commiserated the sufferer! but to pen down, and print such reproaches, seems to me unjustifiable. It must either arise from the unmanly wish of revenge ; or from the selfish hope of awakening pity, till it has conquered reason, duty, or whatever else has been the writer’s enemy.”

“ ‘ He jests at scars, who never felt a wound ! ’ ”

repeated William Mulcaster, with a glance at his sisters, which neutralized his seeming belief of the critic’s insensibility.

“ Ah ! Captain Fitz Arthur, you are hard upon poor love,” was Honoria’s exclamation, as she raised her eyes to him ; his face was still suffused, for Mr. Mulcaster’s glance had not escaped unob-

served ; and trying to cover his confusion by an air of liveliness, he resumed hastily, " In my opinion it is just as unlawful to apply tortures to the mind, as it is to the body, for the sake of extorting confessions. I can imagine a situation in which a woman may appear to deserve some such reproaches as these ; yet be, in fact, governed by the most admirable motives, whilst making the cruel sacrifice. I can imagine many more such situations on this sorrow-teeming globe than —"

" Oh, now I understand you !" Honoria instantly thought of Miss Clavering. " If this case at all resemble the one I perceive you are thinking of, then I admit my poet is unjustifiable."

Another and another tide of blood overspread every part of Fitz Arthur's face as Honoria spoke ; but Mr. Mulcaster spared him the trouble of explaining, by breaking in upon the dialogue with a burst of laughter.

" You two are capital fun just now, arguing about nothing ! Most ladies' way of arguing, by the way. I remember this

poem well. I found a whole lot of them one day when I was rummaging up Gubbins's writing-case ; and he was in a fuss ; and at last told me they were meant for a romance he was writing. So it is some Philander or Orlando that Fitz Arthur would like to run through the body, and that you Miss O'Hara are in such a hurry to break your pitying heart for."

"What a waste of words and feelings then !" cried Honoria, secretly rejoiced at finding Mr. Peter Gubbins was only a lover in print. "But I hope now, Captain Fitz Arthur, that you cease to consider my champion of the shamrock as one whom we ought not to take an interest in." In spite of herself, Honoria could not prevent a little flutter being perceptible in her voice, as she asked this question ; and Fitz Arthur's was not the steadier in consequence, while answering.

"It would be a sort of fraud then, against an absent man, if I did not increase your interest in him, by telling you, that whether proud or ashamed of

himself and his circumstances, he seemed to think it right to explain them in a note addressed to me the day after our ball, to apologize for certain appearances; but I must not repeat what he said."

"And did he not own his father was a hop-dealer?" asked both the Misses Mulcaster.

"He certainly did tell me more about himself than I could expect," replied Fitz Arthur, smiling at the hasty and vehement gestures of their brother behind them. "But as he had certainly no intention of circulating his confidence, you must pardon me for making myself full as disagreeable as your brother here."

"Horrid things! I dare say you are both freemasons!" ejaculated the eager Sophia. "Now, I dare say you will be afraid of telling us whether the man writes a plain tradesman's hand, or a gentlemanly scrawl?"

"As poetical a hand as fair lady could desire," was the answer. "Every second word left to the imagination."

"Did the letter please you otherwise?"

enquired our heroine, half ashamed of the interest she felt in the writer.

“ Indeed it did. There was a noble candour in it, — a self-blame for something of intrusion ; but I am saying too much. I suspect he wished even the fact of his letter to be as private as its contents. Yet so called upon here, — so tempted to do justice to one who honoured himself by humbling himself, — one so justly admired for — for talents, — so called upon, I really cannot be so very discreet as I ought.”

Generous Fitz Arthur ! Thus to arm another's image against your own dearest wishes ! At that moment a glance from Honoria thrilled through every nerve of his body, followed by the immediate conviction of delight being folly ; for the mere approval of that look might as well belong to the being of her imagination, as to himself. In truth, the glance was like “ life's mingled yarn, good and ill together ;” for both admiration of the speaker, and the spoken of, were in it. Neither the one nor the other, as yet,

however, could have claimed the largest portion of the sentiment.

Whatever that eye-beam implied, Fitz Arthur felt that it would be wise in him not to stay for another. So rising, with as much calmness as he could assume, he hastily wished the little party good morning, and retired.

Miss O'Hara was now left to bear the brunt of every one's raillery or railing. Mr. Mulcaster accused her of being cruelly insensible to his friend Fitz Arthur's ill-concealed passion. Miss Preston declared, it was quite out of the Captain's power to be in Miss O'Hara's society without *committing* himself. The Misses Mulcaster good-humouredly declared, they were glad they saw too little of him, to envy Miss O'Hara for captivating, and to hate her for not caring about him. Whilst Mrs. Preston, firm to her one opinion, because it was her secret wish, kept quietly saying, "Oh, very well! We shall see, six months hence. I only hope Captain Fitz Arthur will never think of asking *me* to marry him,

for depend upon it, I shall forget I am sixty."

A general laugh at Mrs. Preston's way of recommending her favourite, turned the almost serious attack upon Honoria into a jest; and she was bearing her part pretty successfully in the bantering to and fro, when the horses of the Misses Mulcaster, and their brother, were announced.

All within doors was bustle and good-byes, —picking up of whips, —and floundering through long skirted habits; whilst from without, was heard the prancing and pulling up of the horses, which the groom chose to show off in great style, to the delight of various dogs, big and little, who were yelping and jumping round their heels.

"Never attempt to run the county, Sophy!" exclaimed Mr. Mulcaster, as he passed to the gates whence all this uproar was heard and seen; "for any fool may track you. Always with a string of puppies after you, either two-legged or four-legged, like a Highland

chief with his tail on. What bores you girls are ! I pass my life in flogging your yelping dogs, and shying your stupid admirers. Why don't you get married at once, and rid me of such infernal plagues ?”

“ Of course, it is for the sake of obliging you in this particular, that your sister accumulates her number of admirers,” observed Honoria, “ that she may have more choice.”

“ You never were more mistaken in your days !” exclaimed Mr. Mulcaster, who piqued himself upon appearing to care nothing for sisters, whom he really loved, and had a pride in. “ The girl never makes any fellows in love with her, — and she don't want it. Only let her have a score of idle dangles at her beck and call, upon all occasions, and that's enough for her ! She marry ! ‘ I give thee sixpence ! I'll see thee — ha, hum, ha'd first.’ I must not swear, you see, Miss O'Hara, even by quotation. Parody the passage ! parody the passage !” And whistling with more light-

heartedness than refinement, Mr. Mulcaster strode before his sisters through the side gate. Then, after duly patting and praising his sleek mare, calling her dear slut, and insisting upon Miss O'Hara's doing the same, he assisted his sisters to mount, — settled their stirrups, their petticoats, and what he called all the rest of their *horrid tackle*; and bestowing sundry benedictions upon *the inventors of women*, and sundry denunciations upon the barking dogs, rode away with a happy carelessness of look, which made Honoria exclaim, as she involuntarily contrasted it in her remembrance with the varying eyes and cheek of poor Fitz Arthur, "That boy in love!"

The party on horseback cantered off to Shafto Place; the young ladies had a visit to return. The brother intended to parade the poems of his friend, by description and eulogium: the poems themselves being left in Miss O'Hara's hand for quick perusal. The day was exactly such a one as tempts people in the country to pay visits; so Mrs. Shafto

was at home, and her daughters were "somewhere about the house or grounds." Miss Shafto looked best in a bonnet, *she* was out of doors: and of course kept on her hat when called in. Miss Augusta's nose had the infirmity of getting red at the tip whenever she was hurried, or heated, or cold, — so she was sitting very still at an upright piano-forte. Miss Matilda's stupid face always wanted a fillip; therefore, she was discovered arranging portfolios of caricatures. The mother was loitering about her conservatory, from which, as it communicated immediately with the morning sitting-room, she returned, on the Misses Mulcaster being announced, to her seat at a little ornamented table, where lay the very identical book Mr. William Mulcaster came to puff. Near it stood Mr. Tudor, the smart, obsequious, pedantic Mr. Tudor, making *aluméts* and similes at the same moment.

Nothing could equal Mr. Mulcaster's mortification at finding himself thus forestalled: however, he took up the volume.

Before he could speak, Mrs. Shafto, glancing flatteringly towards him, after welcoming his sisters, exclaimed, "Pray don't waste your agreeableness over that new publication, Mr. Mulcaster! we see you so seldom, that really we cannot spare a moment of you. And it is very indifferent, I assure you: pretty—rather pretty—one of the things,—a battle-piece, I think, or the Earthquake—which was it we thought pretty, Mr. Tudor?—pretty enough!"

"A battle-piece pretty!" repeated Mr. Mulcaster, lifting up his hands and eyes.

"The appellation is not incorrect, sir," observed Mr. Tudor, anxious to vindicate the critical acumen of a lady. "The writer of these verses has none of the true *furor poeticus*; none of that *felicitas in verbis seligendis exquisita*, that *sententiæ acres satyrum et facetum spirantes*, which would enable him to astonish and intimidate. Where will you find in his poor volume such passages as these?"

Here Mr. Tudor bore down upon the late student of All Souls with such a

broadside of quotations and parallel passages, that his shattered opponent was soon obliged to haul his wind and sheer off: he had no way of escape from the bore of rubbing up rusty learning except by allowing himself to be bantered about one of the county beauties; a practice invariably followed by Miss Shafto; who having once had designs upon the gentleman, was now never weary of proving her complete indifference to all his concerns.

William Mulcaster was at that age when young men like to give publicity to their love, and to the name of its object: and as the goddess of Mr. Mulcaster's worship had a noble preface to her baptismal appellation, he was the less unwilling to hear that name coupled with his own. The fair Lady Catherine too, was not so cruel as to dislike hearing of her cruelty from any person good-natured enough to gratify girlish vanity, by talking to her of herself, and of Mr. Mulcaster.

Thus, both the adorer and the adored were what they called *quizzed* about each

other ; and neither of them showed violent displeasure in consequence. All but the couple themselves, therefore, were quite sure it would be a match : they knew their own hearts better.

Mr. Mulcaster now delivered himself over to the flattering *badinage* of Mrs. Shafto. Yet once or twice he endeavoured to resume the subject of Mr. Peter Gubbins and his poems.

Mrs. Shafto was not in luck ; she did not perceive the interest her guest took in the subject, though he recurred to it.

“ My dear Mr. Mulcaster ! ” she exclaimed, as she went on rolling and pinching the slips of pink paper, which Mr. Tudor was carefully cutting for her important manufacture ; “ don’t insist upon our admiring a book, written by any one with two such names, — he must be an under sort of person ; and really, really,” (looking round the room with an affectation of search,) “ I may say it here — I cannot think elegant compositions of any kind can proceed from any pen but a gentleman’s : so do let us talk of a

much pleasanter thing ; one more in your own way. Have you heard that our great neighbours are coming amongst us again ? Some of the Wearmouth family are positively coming from Lord Sarum's, to be at Ravenshaw while the races are going on."

"Are they indeed?" exclaimed Mr. Mulcaster. "I bet six to two my friend Gubbins is of the party, — Mr. Peter Gubbins."

"Indeed!" re-echoed the lady of the mansion. "Is he a person of that style?"

In spite of Mrs. Shafto's foregone complacent attention to his oft-repeated "Lady Catherine said," and "Lady Catherine was going," Mr. Mulcaster was so ungratefully piqued at the slight thrown upon his fellow-student's talents, that turning upon her with the air of *you shall get no more out of me*, he gravely answered, "I hope you find nothing very astonishing, Mrs. Shafto, in a friend of mine being a friend of Lord Wearmouth's!"

Mrs. Shafto was overwhelmed ; self-

convicted of extreme ill-breeding. Never had she been so completely thrown off her guard. To get handsomely out of the scrape was impossible, unless she sacrificed truth. Hers was a life of sacrifice in that way : so now, assuming perfect ease, she said, smilingly, “ I was a little surprised at your poet being either a statesman or a man on the turf — that was all. He may be neither, though he *is* Lord Wearmouth’s acquaintance, and coming down to these races. Emilia, do you happen to know which of the Wearmouth family are coming to Ravenshaw ?”

This question was asked with that air of indifference to every common and uncommon occurrence, which it is so peculiarly the province of a sated and fashionable life to bestow ; which Mrs. Shafto therefore assumed ; and which, from having previously acquainted herself with the particulars she was enquiring into, she gave in most felicitous style.

Miss Shafto put up her glass to hear the question. “ I think, while she was

dressing me to-day, Thompson told me ——”

“How sure all waiting-maids’ names are to be Thompson, or Johnson, or some such vulgar name!” interposed Mr. Mulcaster.

Mrs. Shafto smiled on him with more than her usual suavity. Such a smile ought to have put him in good-humour with her for life. But a man deep in flirtation with a Lady Catherine, could not easily forgive the insult of having been deemed unworthy the acquaintance of the acquaintance of a noble earl: and he kept sturdily stiff, not even bending his head in sign of thankfulness.

Miss Shafto’s offended air reproved him for the rudeness of breaking in upon her reply to her mother. She went on: “I think Thompson told me, Lord Wearmouth himself is coming, with the Dowager; and Lord Francis Fitz James, one of young Lady Wearmouth’s cousins; and a good many more people, whose names she had not heard. I really forget, though. — Mr. Tudor, do be so good as put away

that tuberose ; it is so overpowering !” — And by this little commission Miss Shafto intended at once to confirm her indifference to the titled party in prospect, and her thorough disregard of Mr. Mulcaster. Mr. Tudor’s hasty obedience nearly over-set him. He was recompensed for momentary confusion by the liberal display of his white hands and his invaluable onyx, which the removal of the unwieldy garden-pot afforded.

Mrs. Shafto meanwhile had quietly risen from her seat, crossed the room, either for her work-bag, or solely for the purpose of being arrested in passing a window by the sight of Mr. Mulcaster’s mare, which she declared was the most complete and beautiful animal she had ever seen. At first she kindly bestowed it upon Mr. Tudor ; then observed two ladies’ horses leading about also ; so prettily recollected that it *might* be Mr. Mulcaster’s — nay, it *must* be Mr. Mulcaster’s, for she always heard gentlemen speak of *him* as the best judge of a horse in the county.

Mr. Mulcaster's ill-humour must have been dyed in grain, for it abated not a jot of its blackness after this pungent compliment. However, the lady reseated herself with dauntless placidity, and once more addressed him : — “ I shall look over these poems again with quite a new feeling, since you say their writer is a friend of yours, though I am past the age, I acknowledge, of admiring poetry with such animation as younger people do ; but my girls, I suspect, have the taste of their age ; and if your friend were only a poet, would be delighted to know him. As *your* friend, I put in my claim for his acquaintance, — you must let me owe the gratification of making his acquaintance to you, — you must do me the favour of bringing him to Shafto Place.”

Mrs. Shafto did not doubt that the poet was a man of family, since he was admitted to the domestic circle of Lord Wearmouth ; and if not worth marrying himself, might be a great help in other ways — such as writing and circulating little complimentary songs upon her daughters,

swelling their train of admirers, if such train existed, &c. &c.; and her repeated *you musts* were all said with most insinuating humility.

Both the Misses Mulcaster, thinking of hops, and the city, burst into a fit of laughter; vainly trying to get out a few words which would have ended the lady's solicitations at once; but their brother's quick and commanding frown chained their tongues, and he said carelessly, "I shall certainly tell my friend what you say; but he is such a spoiled child, that I assure you he goes nowhere from mere civility, — he will know nobody, till he sees whether he likes them or not."

"Oh, William!" ejaculated his sister Jane.

"'Tis the fact, however, Miss Janet, in spite of your little ignorant exclamation. A man may be in the same room a million of times with a set of quizzes, and hear all their stuff and nonsense, without being obliged to know them. It would be desperately hard, as the world goes now, if one must be introduced to

all the bores, and lions, and puppies, that tag after our old maiden aunts, and young maiden sisters !”

Mr. Mulcaster saw Mrs. Shafto's colour rise, though she still preserved the usual fawning courtliness of her countenance. He still owed her a grudge ; and though past the age of throwing stones and soaping staircases out of pure waggishness, he yet enjoyed a bigger bit of mischief. Turning suddenly and spritely round to his sisters, he exclaimed, “ Girls ! what will you bet that the pretty Honor O'Hara does not catch Gubbins ?”

“ Is your friend so susceptible then ?” asked Mrs. Shafto, scarcely able to command her looks any longer : “ or perhaps *you* think that young lady pre-eminently beautiful !”

Such a report did not suit Mr. Mulcaster's views in another quarter ; and he replied, in some confusion, “ No—yes—I think her extremely pretty ; though I don't generally like dark eyes.” The eyes of Lady Catherine, our sagacious readers must guess, were light.

“ I am quite of your opinion,” returned the able mistress of the mansion. “ Black eyes certainly give rather too assured a look to a woman’s face, which, I believe, you gentlemen say, ought always to be soft and retiring. I remember your godfather, Sir Harry Jessop (who, by the way, was one of the most refined judges of his day, in these matters I mean,) used to remark that they were fit only for a milkmaid. How well I recollect his admiration of Lady Hexham’s eyes when she was just married!—so *very* soft — so *very* blue — so unlike all other eyes, except her *very* charming daughter’s !”

Mr. Mulcaster did not yet flinch, though the Countess of Hexham was mother to Lady Catherine. He was intended for a senator; and this sample of his resolute stand against bribery, ought to have been given on the hustings to his constituents.

Bowing cavalierly to Mrs. Shafto, he begged to represent his godfather’s ghost, while thanking her for the compliment to his memory; then pursuing

his determination of provoking her, resumed about Miss O'Hara.

“ I think she will just suit our poet's taste. Then I shall take care to tell him how she devoured his poems this morning, never asking whether he were a peer or a ploughman. That touch will have a great effect upon him : for if he were a peer, he would hate to be *toadied* about his rank, full as much as he does now about his genius.”

Mrs. Shafto treasured up this useful hint concerning the poet ; but as it took her some instants to digest the bitter emphasis with which Mr. Mulcaster had uttered the word *toadied*, Mr. Tudor found opportunity to say, with forced indifference, while his visage fluctuated between green and white, “ Some of your friend's verses lead me to conjecture he has no heart to bestow, even upon Miss O'Hara — so what think you of proposing Lord Francis Fitz James for her ? ”

This was meant for a pleasantry, and taken accordingly. The Misses Mulcaster

glanced at each other, and laughed ; the Misses Shafto severally threw back their heads in due rotation, with a due portion of contemptuous pity ; the eldest coldly drawling out, “ Now pray, Mr. Tudor, don't be too severe on that poor girl ! ”

“ Many a heart's caught on the rebound, they say,” exclaimed Mr. Mulcaster ; “ and I say, sought into the bargain ! Eh, Miss Shafto ! eh, Tudor ! ” — (Miss Shafto was indignant scarlet ; Mr. Tudor was rainbow confusion.) — “ So if my friend Gubbins *has* had his heart trampled on by one woman, it is no reason why he should not lodge it in the kinder arms of another. And as to Tudor's idea of Lord Francis, it is quite capital : I am determined forthwith to adopt it, and shall with all speed stride off, and desire Miss O'Hara to sharpen her best arrows for both the Lord and the Bard.”

“ Are you not a little afraid, my dear Mr. Mulcaster,” observed Mrs. Shafto, with an air of affected benevolence, “ that such a flattering injunction, from one of

our admired young men, may tend to turn that pretty little head? Surely it is cruel to excite hopes and wishes impossible to have realized! The poor thing has neither family, fortune, nor, I fear, education, (as we now understand that very comprehensive word,) to allow of any really well-born person's thinking seriously of her; pretty, very pretty, and pleasing as she is. I am truly sorry for her. Mrs. Meredith, though an excellent vulgar woman, *is* a vulgar woman—quite out of the question of being visited: so who could marry such a woman's niece? I am not afraid of saying I think connection is every thing in marriage. If Lord Francis Fitz James followed *my* advice, Mr. Mulcaster, I fear" (smiling with a most caressing air of mock threatening,) "he would enter the lists against *you*, for the favour of a certain very high bred, elegant young woman in his own set."

Mr. Mulcaster was fairly beat: the flattery and the intimidation, were too much for his resolution, to go on vexing

her. Happily his youngest sister's voluble ardour came to his aid. "Take care, Mrs. Shafto," she archly exclaimed. "Take care of what you say of Mrs. Meredith. I can tell you, if that will at all save her, that *we* visit her now; and I think there is one, rather connected with you, that would very willingly make Miss O'Hara your relation, if she would give him leave to do so."

Mrs. Shafto was all astonishment, — sincere astonishment. She looked astonishment, — she expressed astonishment: the very *alumét* quivered between her finger and thumb with astonishment. "What could Miss Jane Mulcaster mean?"

The blooming girl had something of her brother's hardihood of character, and though her Euphrosyne smiles disappeared before the chilling look of the questioner, she persisted in explaining. "Everybody could see," she said, "that Captain Fitz Arthur was dying for Miss O'Hara, and that she was cruelly insensible to him. This was quite evident, for he was

always so low and embarrassed in her company; and she was so gaily at her ease in his."

"*Our* cousin Delaval Fitz Arthur dying for Miss O'Hara! *our* cousin!" was repeated all down the file of the Misses Shafto at the same moment, in different keys. Disdain and disbelief was meant to be the expression of each; but the eldest sister's sharp alt was the successful one.

Mrs. Shafto had now quelled herself. "Will you permit me to give you a different version of such observations?" she asked graciously. "I have Sir Everard's authority for saying his son's views are in another quarter. And no wonder, where there is such loveliness, and *will* be so much fortune. The young lady you speak of, has of course *her* view's in playing the agreeable before the heir of Arthur's Court. Idly calculating upon her being a favourite with the good old Baronet, and not being in the secret of this old India flame, she hopes to succeed; but I venture to say, both father

and son may patronize her, when they would be shocked to hear a hint of such degradation as you speak of, Miss Jane. I am not at liberty to enter fully into Captain Fitz Arthur's present plans and prospects. Thus much I will say, I am vastly sorry if this young person is so very much set up by injudicious notice, as to fancy she dare attempt the conquest of the heir of a baronetcy ; and I only pray you will pardon me, if I own to being a little, — a very little, affronted at the bare idea of such a person declining the future possessor of Arthur's Court. It is very amiable in you to patronize this young person, — so natural to a good heart ! but you are just as likely to make a bosom friend of one so completely out of your own set, as any man of birth and fashion is to marry her."

Mrs. Shafto's astrologer ought to have learned his lesson from Cæsar's ; he should have bid her "beware of March." On this memorable morning she was singularly unfortunate. Miss Jane Mulcaster's cheeks blazed through the thick

clusters of gold-brown hair which vainly tried to hide their resentful colour, and intercept the sudden anger of her generally gladsome eyes. She boldly avowed a strict friendship with Miss O'Hara, commenced she confessed at the Arthur's Court ball: where, though she had talked little with Miss O'Hara, she had heard and seen so much of her delightfulness to others, that she never rested till she got her papa to let them all ride over and call at the Rectory. She was quite sorrow St. Cuthberts was such a way off Edenfell, — eight miles! but for that, they must have met so often before, and found out how much they should like one another! As to her papa, the Dean, he was enchanted with Miss O'Hara's charming countenance and natural manners. For her part, Miss Jane wondered that all the men were not dying for Miss O'Hara, as well as Captain Fitz Arthur."

"But, my dear Jane!" interposed her better, disciplined sister, "Mrs. Shafto assures you, Captain Fitz Arthur has no thought of our pretty friend; pray don't

be so positive," and she made a signal look, by way of bidding her sister give up the point, and keep the opinion. The honest-hearted Jane paid no attention to it, resuming eagerly: — "Well! all I will say for a certainty, is, that if Captain Fitz Arthur ever does propose, he will not be accepted: for Honoria never *will* marry any person she don't care about, to the greatest degree; and I know she is not in the least attached to him."

"When Captain Fitz Arthur *does* propose, Miss Jane," returned Mrs. Shafto, actually shivering with repressed violence, "*you* will allow *me* to be quite as certain, that he will *not* be refused."

"So people said about Mr. Frazer," Jane resumed, out of breath with good-natured earnestness; "and yet you see *he* was turned away."

"Did the young lady tell you so?" enquired Mrs. Shafto insidiously. "One would not credit it otherwise."

"O, no! but one may guess, — one may be sure."

“ My dear, warm-hearted, generous Miss Jane, allow an older woman, — a much older woman than yourself, to be a little sceptical on such subjects. I do not doubt Miss O'Hara's pretensions to beauty ; but Mr. Frazer was evidently *not* a marrying man, even supposing she was a proper connection. Had he been so, there were a few faces in the county that I shall name, if you provoke me,” (playfully looking up at her Hebe face,) “ amongst people of his own class, that must have secured him before he saw Miss O'Hara's.

The blooming Jane was not so remorseless and unappeasable as her brother. She knew herself to be one of the county beauties, and she looked blushing aside ; then rallying back her spirit, dauntlessly repeated, “ Well ! for all that, I will still maintain that Miss O'Hara refused Mr. Frazer.”

“ Gentlemen must take care then, how they propose to your pretty friend, it seems, for more reasons than one ;” observed Mrs. Shafto, obliquely glancing

at a table covered with fashionable trifles, to which Mr. Tudor had retreated at the commencement of this conversation, and where he now stood curiously examining a gold thimble, as if tasked to make one.

“ Mr. Tudor, will you be so very good as give me that thimble? I was just going to look for it, and show Miss Sophia Mulcaster a new sort of satin-stitch I have learned from Lady Henderson. Mr. Mulcaster, what are you taking up your hat for? Now you have done all possible mischief to poor Matilda's classification of these ridiculous prints! I wonder, Mr. Tudor, if the Roman ladies used thimbles.”

Mr. Tudor, lifted at once from his present insignificance and recent confusion, and lifted too upon his hobby-horse, set off full gallop; and even the rival images of the openly scornful Miss O'Hara, and the covertly encouraging Miss Shafto, were immediately run down. He was full cry after authorities and grounds for opinions: and had already named every Latin author, whose name had heretofore struck terror into the soul

of the young collegian, when the latter started up, and called on his sisters to wish Mrs. Shafto good day.

“I hear the awful roll of a carriage! O those confounded curs of yours, Sophy!” he exclaimed, as the shrill yelping of some, — the hoarse baying of others, — and the low growl of a muzzled mastiff belonging to the house, were heard mingling with the sound of wheels. “What with their noise, and Mr. Tudor’s learning, my brain is fairly bothered. Every one of those brutes, from this day forth, will always seem to me to be barking in Latin; and Mr. Tudor, when he speaks, bow-wowling. Association of ideas, Mr. Tudor, you know. — Man is the victim of associations.”

The light-hearted William gave his sister Jane’s arm such a tight squeeze against his side, as he uttered this boyish sarcasm, under the mask of Mr. Tudor’s own pomposity, that she cried out; and in the confusion of her scream, Mrs. Shafto’s polite solicitude, and the announcement of fresh visitors, the brother and sisters finally escaped to their horses.

Mrs. Shafto looked after the party for a moment, with an emotion rather like compassion. "Poor, unfashioned creatures!" she thought; "it is evident they have no mother!" And she turned to simper upon, and flatter her second set of visitors, with the proud consciousness of having rendered *her* girls as sharp-sighted to their own little interests, and as coldly indifferent to every other human beings, as nature had made herself.

Meanwhile, Mr. Mulcaster was exclaiming, "How I do abominate toadies and lick-spittles!"

"And don't you think Mrs. Shafto returns the compliment, by abominating impudent, ill-mannered boys?" asked one smiling sister, as they cantered along.

"Well, if she does, I can tell you her aversion warms my heart. Such a scarecrow as she is, to all heart and heartiness! Such a cankered heap of envy and malice, and flattery and falseness, and flummery and frippery, and —" "William! William!"

"I do delight in humbugging and

mystifying her! Did you mark, girls, how I worked her about Miss O'Hara? and what a fuss she was in when she found my friend Gubbins was *good company*. Such fools as she, are enough to put one out of humour with family and breeding, and all that my dear quiz of a father calls 'the salutary distinctions of society.' One week in Mrs. Shafto's society would drive me into binding myself apprentice to a butcher or a tailor; but I have not done with her yet."

"I protest she has made you quite savage to-day!" observed the sprightly Sophia.

Mr. Mulcaster abruptly checked his horse, as if going to turn about. "By the white hands of Mr. Tudor," he exclaimed, "I've a great mind to ride back, merely to tell her to abuse Gubbins's poems to Lord Francis Fitz James. I'll tell her he thinks them poor stuff, — there'll be a kettle! For he and Gubbins are inseparable friends."

"O fie, William!" cried his favourite

sister, "planning a fib for the sake of tormenting a person. You, the son of a clergyman!"

"Pshaw! I wish I was the son of a tinker, if my father's trade is to keep me in awe. I am not planning a fib, Miss Janet: Fitz James does not think any thing of Gubbins's verses; yet he has such a regard for the fellow, that I am much mistaken if he'll like to hear his genius questioned by an old rag-doll like Mrs. Shafto."

"William! William!" repeated Sophia, "you have got such a trick of saying that old rag-doll when you speak of Mrs. Shafto, and swearing by the white hands of Mr. Tudor, that I am in terror every instant you will say it to themselves."

"And don't you think it would do them both, lots of good?" asked the positive William. "Mrs. Shafto might then leave off painting her face with whiting, which I'm sure she cribs from the maids for cheapness; and Tudor might give up the villanous practice of

poulticing his paws every night. Horrid monster !”

“But you perverse boy !” cried his elder sister, “why will you persist in believing Mrs. Shafto paints white ? Did you ever yet hear of a woman painting herself a regular ghost-colour ?”

“Pshaw ! I tell you she does it to look genteel ; she thinks *colour so very unladylike*.” (Mimicking her.) “And as to Tudor, I only wish I had him and his pap and panada hands at Eton, and I one of the fifth form again ; see if we would not tattoo them a right goblin black. Look at this hand, girls !” (thrusting forth a palm, garnished with a set of long elegant fingers, that might once have honoured the roseate-handed morn :) “I hope I’ve cheated the family complexion. Look ! behold the blessed effects of cricketing, rowing, sparring, clambering, bell-ringing, cooking, driving, and flogging your confounded dogs ; who’d say these hands were cut out of the same cloth with your little pinks and whites ?”

“Who, indeed!” reiterated the laughing Jane, drawing off her glove, and placing a hand more delicate than a flower, by the side of his tanned one.

The affectionate brother gave it a fond squeeze, which he suddenly changed into a screw; so much of the boy was there still in his ripening manliness. “Come, you stand the torture bravely!” he cried. “You look all the prettier for it, — it has made you blow out like a full-blown rose. Jane, I’ve a great mind to kiss you, where you sit, on the back of your mare, (which, by the way, you are now sitting with the grace of a corn sack,) I’ve a great mind to kiss you, for having given that whited-wall, that pale pyramid, such a famous set down about Miss O’Hara.”

There were not lighter hearts in the county than those of the Misses Mulcaster: and at this compliment to Jane, both sisters burst out laughing. But Sophia quickly recovering herself, and believing that three years difference in their ages, imposed upon her the dis-

agreeable duty of lecturing Jane occasionally, hastened to remind her of her over-eagerness in the dispute with Mrs. Shafto. She said many meritorious things upon the propriety of deference to older persons, — upon the possibility of preserving truth and politeness at the same time, — of the injury so often done to a friend by being too vehement in their cause ; and she instanced Jane's positive assertion concerning Mr. Frazer's refusal, when the former only gathered it from some vague expression in a note of his, to their father.

Miss Sophia took care to add, it was evident Mrs. Shafto would make the most of this indiscretion, and go about saying Miss O'Hara was either a false boaster, or a most dishonourable young woman.

Poor Jane had not a word to say for herself ; the crimes of positiveness and imprudence were proved upon her : and she could only repeat, " I am very sorry." But her brother clamoured in her behalf, if he could not argue ; till, by main force of lungs and ludicrous

epithets, aided by sundry tremendous seeming lashes at Sophia's dogs, he fairly silenced his sister's reluctant reproofs.

This young man had all the materials in him for building up a most valuable character; as yet, these lay in notable disorder, the rubbish uppermost. He was not twenty, and with inherent love of *the true* in every thing, *detested*, as he termed it, every body who was false. His was the age of vehement indignation and relentless justice: and had he been elected king, his first public act would have been, to have had Mrs. Shafto whipped at the cart's tail throughout his dominions.

With common inconsistency, however, William Mulcaster assumed something himself; he affected a tone of roughness and rudeness with sisters he doated upon, — and spoke of a father he loved and revered, too often, as if he were speaking of an old hunk.

Having caught the fashionable cant of denominating every displayed good feeling *humbug*, he (what he called,) *bullied*

the expression of each ; therefore went on doing the humanest things, with an air of pettish humour.

If during rides or walks he saw a sheep cast, or a young bird fall down from the nest, he was sure to stop, and turn the one, or climb to replace the other ; always exclaiming, however, " There ! I suppose I *must* go and help these brutes, or I shall have no peace with you foolish girls ! "

As he was never willingly without one or other of his sisters, he was sometimes complimented upon being a good brother. On such occasions, he never failed turning upon the luckless complimenter, and goring them with the outcry of, " I fond of the girls ! — Never was man more heartily tired of a set of women, tagging after him like so many imps tormenting a big fiend ! Here I go, hawking them all over the county, and not a creature will take them off my hands. The fellows are too knowing." Mr. Mulcaster might safely hazard such a declaration, since his sisters were notoriously the county belles.

The Misses Mulcaster had the misfortune of being motherless, which may account for a certain wildness in their family habits. The finest natural qualities need the training hand of judicious watchfulness.

As their father looked rather to the solid than the brilliant in their education, they were deficient in dazzling accomplishments. Not one of them played, or sung, or danced, a whit better than girls with ordinary ears and voices were likely to do under the tuition of provincial masters. They could read French easily, but not lard their conversation with it. They were not ignorant upon any one subject of art or literature, but they were learned in none.

Yet, in spite of this mediocrity of acquirements, they made St. Cuthberts so pleasant, that it might vie with Mrs. Preston's house in the number of its daily visitors.

After all, natural good sense, good humour, and good spirits are women's staples. If men would speak out, they

would confess, that to be always admiring is very fatiguing; and that nine times out of ten, they would prefer the light amusement of general conversation, to the weighty demands of first-rate music, or the toilsome task of attending to an eloquent harangue.

Since the death of her mother, the eldest Miss Mulcaster had governed her father's house, without attempting to govern her sisters; she was mild and affectionate, solicitous to make her sisters happy, and careless of her own gratifications. At seven and twenty, with the complexion of seventeen, a lovely figure, and a Madonna countenance, she chose to consider herself as of matron age; and, in that persuasion, felt and looked solely anxious to have other girls seen and admired. She was, of course, her father's principal companion: and tenderly beloved by all for whom her influence with him, procured indulgences.

Sophia, the second sister, was showy and attractive: she liked to be busy, and amused and amusing; she delighted in

being the centre of a circle, either of men, women, children, or dumb animals. She had the art of pleasing them all, and keeping them all in good humour, — perhaps because she did not excite strong emotions. Nothing could be more elegant than her person, or prettier than the play of her countenance. The pretty expressions of the latter, indeed, made very indifferent pleasantries pass for wit, as she uttered them; and her admirers were accustomed to speak of her, therefore, as singularly entertaining. Of admirers the fair Sophia had crowds, for it had become a county fashion, to make one of the train that were at her orders, and followed her to ball, race, or walk, striving for no more substantial favour at her hands, than the momentary preference of being bid to carry her shawl, or pick up her fan. With this sort of admiration, Sophia Mulcaster was so thoroughly satisfied, that a shrewd relation secretly prophesied she would be the only old maid in the family.

Henrietta, the third girl, was less

striking, but infinitely more endearing when known. In large parties, she smiled and observed, and said little; but with the chosen few, she was demurely comic, if not sportive; and the timid, down-looking eye was then raised with an arch humour, which was often irresistible.

Jane, the youngest, had more positive character and beauty, than any one of her sisters: she was all bloom, buoyancy, freshness, and mirthfulness: an extravagance of good-nature and good-humour, with what are called *tearing spirits*, made her the joy of the house, and the favourite of their neighbourhood.

In the inclination to give, Jane was bounty itself: her yearly allowance was always exhausted before it was due; her charities were indiscriminate, it must be owned, as she never staid to enquire into a case of distress, before she relieved it; but her gifts of mere good-will, though nearly as numerous, were bestowed on fewer persons. Never could she bear to go to a friend empty-handed; when

she did not bring them a pre-determined present, it was a ring instantaneously snatched off her finger, or a bracelet off her arm, or an ornamented comb out of her hair, or the plume from her hat; in short a tour amongst her favourites, would at any time send Jane Mulcaster home, stripped of every personal decoration.

Jane had *been out* only one year, yet in that short time, it was whispered, she had been as liberal of her heart as of her trinkets. This, however, was a cruel calumny; the blooming Jane having only been too obviously sorry for two pleasing men, whom neither she herself, nor her father, liked well enough to admit into their family.

Such were the children of the excellent Dean of ———, who were now cantering homewards over roads like life, rough and smooth by turns; entering into an offensive league against the mistress of Shafto Place, and determining to *stand up* for Miss O'Hara, because that scheming personage evidently sought to *put her down*.

CHAP. VII.

WITH as little notice of every natural beauty he had passed on his way to Hazeldean, as he then bestowed on them, did Captain Fitz Arthur now retrace the same paths. For some time his thoughts were full of Honoria, — again, he thrilled with those momentary glances which had kindled as brief a transport, — again, he dwelt with saddening intentness upon her rekindled interest, in her champion, the new poet.

It was too obvious that her heart was yet fluttering, untaken, and uncertain, though longing with natural instinct to wing its way to some sheltering breast; as obvious, that such shelter was not to be, could never be, his fondly yearning bosom! Under such conviction, he strove not to think of her.

Every step he now took towards his home, certainly distanced her image: darker interests usurped the tender ones

of love ; whilst at each turning of meadow or road, the figure of the stranger he had seen on the avenue at Arthur's Court, seemed to rise before him.

That ill-omened countenance threatened so much of distress and disgrace to all he loved, that he felt it had now become his duty to speak upon the subject to his father, and learn what they had yet to dread from this suspected relation.

To prevent the frustration of this wise resolution, Fitz Arthur went, immediately upon entering the house, to his brother Hylton's apartments, to enquire if he would not take advantage of so fine an afternoon, and drive over to Hazeldean.

One of Fitz Arthur's additions to his poor brother's means of exercise and amusement, had been a little four-wheeled open carriage, drawn by one sure-footed horse ; and he now urged him to use it, under John Abbot's care ; promising, that if he should stay to take an early tea at Mrs. Preston's, he would himself come and drive him back.

Fitz Arthur was aware that if Hylton

remained at home, (though he always dined at a much earlier hour than the rest of the family,) he would in some measure prove an obstacle to the wished-for confidence : since it was not the custom either of Sir Everard or himself, to absent themselves long from this object of their mutual solicitude ; and Hylton himself, was ever eager to accept his father's challenge to chess, or his brother's to some amusing exercise of memory. Having previously ascertained that Miss O'Hara was not going to spend the day at Hazeldean, and that Mrs. Preston was not going anywhere else, he now continued to talk of the green hedges, and the balmy air, till Hylton was roused from that lassitude of body and mind too common with invalids, and led to give his assent : the low carriage was then ordered ; and having seen him comfortably seated, and fairly off, he retired to make some slight alteration in his own dress.

The last dinner bell had ceased ; and the orderly steps of the butler, with his

weight of soup and silver, were heard crossing the hall, followed by three of his satellites, bearing dishes of lesser consequence, ere Fitz Arthur descended from his room. He had certainly not been looking in the glass all that time: neither had he left his servant ruefully contemplating twenty *failures*, in the shape of so many neckcloths, ill-tied, or clumsily folded. He had been thinking of any thing but himself. So absorbed was he, in settling and altering the way in which he meant to commence his painful enquiry, that even during dinner, his abstraction continued; he was not aware of this himself, therefore was not prepared for his father's remarks upon such unusual seriousness.

The moment Mrs. Fothergill was withdrawn, and their plain wines set upon the table, Sir Everard pressed his son to say what had put him so sadly out of spirits. Ending with the affectionate pleasantry of, "I hope you have no reason to fear your fair mistress will refuse you, when you get my consent to ask her?"

At that instant Fitz Arthur's complexion might have been envied by any pale beauty in Europe; he stammered something that sounded very like words, without being words.

Sir Everard, not a whit the wiser on the subject, continued in the same fatherly tone: "On my life, Delaval, I shall be just as willing to give my consent as old Mrs. Letitia herself. Do you think I would have let you ride twice over to visit them, if the good old lady had not said quite enough to me the night they were here, to show what she wished for her heiress? Faith, when you were dancing together on our ball-night, she asked me if I did not think you would make a proper pair for something better than a dance."

"Sir, I don't understand—who are you speaking of, pray?" enquired his son, in greater confusion and agitation.

"Come, come, Delaval, don't pretend ignorance. Who should I be talking of, except Mrs. Letitia Branspeth and Miss Clavering? I always thought when you

were in India, from what you used to write about her, that you were a little smitten with your general's daughter. Well — well! another year, and our estates will have worked round; and she will have seen enough of Vanity-fair, and all the nonsense they take girls to nowadays; and after that she'll settle down into a good house-governing wife, like your dear mother. So wait till we are a little clear, and then you shall put the question. We'll go with our six horses on that errand, I can tell you."

Here, I must beg leave to inform every dashing young lover, who may do me the honour of skimming these pages, that Sir Everard Fitz Arthur, when he spoke of *going a courting* with six horses, had not the most distant idea of tearing off in the hack-chaise-Gretna-green-style, they suppose. He was very properly thinking of the state-coach, and the state-pace of six stately greys.

By the time his father's little harangue was ended, the son's face was as white as it had just before been red. "Be easy,

dear sir," he said, in rather a husky voice, affecting composure: "I am never likely to put myself in the way of what I might be pretty sure of—a refusal—were I to ask the hand of Miss Clavering. I give you my word, I never fancied myself in the least *smitten* with her, even in India, where I knew her heart had never felt any prepossession. My two visits to Lady Henderson's, while she and Mrs. Branspeth were staying there, were more for her late father's sake than her own, highly, almost affectionately, as I regard her.—I am not given to fall in love, I assure you." (Fitz Arthur sighed, in spite of himself, as he emphasized the words).—"At this moment something of a much weightier nature occupies me.—I own my mind is exceedingly disturbed—distressed. I wish to ask my father a question; and I fear to pain, perplex, perhaps displease.—A person I saw by chance this morning——" Fitz Arthur would not go further.

"Delaval!" exclaimed the Baronet, holding out his hand to him, yet with a

deep glow mounting to his very brow, "when didst thou ever do any one of these willingly?—Speak boy, speak out!—What is it thou art afraid to say, or I am to be afraid of hearing?"

The colour deepened on the father's forehead, and the son remained silent. The former was the first to break the awkward pause; he struck his hand suddenly upon the table, exclaiming, "I'll bet my Chloe against your whelp there, that Wilhelm has been prating—he has told you all about Stephen!"

Fitz Arthur felt an unaccountable qualm come over him—actual sickness: such is the mysterious force of mind! His ashy face presented a striking contrast to the crimson colouring of his father's, while replying in a smothered tone: "Wilhelm has not explained any thing to me, my dearest father! but I encountered a well-dressed man in the walnut-avenue, whose appearance there, occupied as he was, in counting notes, made me apprehensive that—that my father has some pecuniary perplexity still,

from which he excludes his son ; may I say, a son ready to submit to the mortification of knowing no more than that honoured parent chooses to tell ; nay, of asking no more, should he be told it must be so ; a son that only wishes to be made useful—to be allowed to stand between his father—and—unnatural imposition perhaps !”—(Here Fitz Arthur faltered and paused.) “For your own sake, dear sir ; for my young brother’s sake ——”

He stopt abruptly, and affectionately pressing his father’s hand, held it as affectionately to his lips. Never once did he raise his eyes to the face he concluded must now be double-dyed with the colours of shame.

“And prithee, Delaval,” asked Sir Everard, in a moderately embarrassed tone, which his son could not help thinking would have better honoured his years and character had it been more embarrassed, “Where then did you hear, if not from Wilhelm, that this poor misbegotten plagued me for money ?”

Fitz Arthur’s eyes were now rivetted

to the floor. "I merely surmised it, sir, from certain mysterious announcements of his visits to you; from your gracious openness to me upon the manner in which you spent every part of your income, except certain small sums at your banker's." (His father's countenance changed visibly.) "In God's name, do not think, dear sir, I presume to question your right to apply these how and where you will; nay, much, much larger ones. I am ready to acknowledge that the person we speak of has a right to expect, even to claim, due provision; but I am anxious your feelings should not be imposed upon, my other brothers not injured; your own too kindly heart——"

"Your *other* brothers!" repeated Sir Everard, in a tone of genuine astonishment. "Why what brothers have you besides Hylton and Thomas?"

Fitz Arthur looked up: "Is not the man we talk of, my brother?"

The hasty question could not be recalled; but his father's look had answered it whilst uttering; and overpowered with

shame at the indignity his agitated spirits had offered that dear parent, Fitz Arthur bent his head again upon the honoured hand in silence.

“ Oh, now I understand ! now I see ! ” cried the good Baronet, laughing between tears and mirthfulness ; then recovering himself with something like a sigh, he wrung his son's hand : “ No, my boy ! your old father was never such a reprobate as the fellow that made that boy's mother what she was when he was born ; I loved the pretty girl too well, long before I saw your mother though. All the young fellows were in love with her. You must have heard Parson Meredith and me talk of the beautiful Bell Foster. He and I were not friends then, — though the girl cared for neither of us, as it turned out ; and my father would not hear of it. — Come, my boy, cheer up : don't look down again, now you find you need not think a shame of your father ! ”

There was much in Sir Everard's speech to keep Fitz Arthur's eyes still down, though no longer from the pious

'fear of confusing him. An intolerable weight was at once taken from his heart ; but he was overpowered by the sudden sensation of relief. His heart swelled ; every thing in the room seemed to turn round with him, and he might have fallen, had not a burst of joyful tears relieved him. As his son started from his seat, Sir Everard opened his arms ; their looks reflected each other. Fitz Arthur returned his father's strong pressure with one as strong, yet more agitated ; then disengaging himself, hurried out of the apartment.

Will it be wondered at, that the first words he articulated were addressed in hasty ejaculation to his Father in heaven ? " My God, I thank thee !" fervently repeated again and again, was all he was able to say for many minutes, while taking a few disordered turns up and down the passage. Other words were inadequate to express what was passing within him. He rejoiced that one so worthless as this Stephen appeared, was not connected with himself by blood ; he rejoiced that his

innocent brothers were not to be exposed to probable disgrace and suffering on this man's account: above all, he rejoiced that his father's conscience was not burthened with the guilt of seduction. He felt too, as if this moment had been the first in his life, to show him how much he loved that artless parent.

After short absence Fitz Arthur rejoined Sir Everard. The sunshine of happiness was upon his countenance; it warmed his father's heart. He drew a chair close beside him, and affectionately retaking his hand, said, "And who, dear sir, *was* the father of this man? who, from what you say, I still conclude to be a natural son. What are his claims upon us?—I trust I may now ask these questions, without impertinence or irreverence."

The cheerful kindness of his son's voice reassured the Baronet. "Why, to my shame be it spoken," he replied, "the scapegrace has no claim upon me in the whole world; and yet I have been fool enough to let him get such a head of me

somehow, that he has drawn my purse dry often ; when, on my soul, the money ought to have gone to have pushed you on in your profession."

" When you tell me who and what he is," said Fitz Arthur, " I feel pretty sure I shall not think so."

Sir Everard shook his head, but resumed : — " His father was my last lady's only brother ; as handsome and practised a libertine as any going. Poor Bell Foster was only a half-pay navy captain's daughter, with no money, nor much of a bringing up ; her mother being taken off when she was in arms. So a fine man of the world, with a red coat into the bargain, was like enough to persuade her that there was no use in asking his friends' consent. The short and the long is, she went off with him, under promises he never fulfilled. She bore him this son, however ; and her father dying of a broken heart six months afterwards, she never held up her head again, (so my wife told me,) but followed him to the grave before her child was six months'

old. I must tell you (to show you the poor girl was no hardened sinner) that from the hour she heard of her father's death, she refused to live with Major Elliot; went and threw herself and child upon the charity of my tender-hearted Nannie; then, God help her! only a girl of sixteen."

"And could Lady Fitz Arthur at that time be of any essential service to her?" asked Fitz Arthur.

"Indeed she was," answered Sir Everard. "She interceded with her father for her maintenance; and he, seeing that poor Bell was a true penitent, was only too glad to put her out of his son's way. However, as I tell you, she lived but five or six months after Captain Foster's death; leaving her child a sort of legacy to its young aunt. All would have done very well, had it not pleased God to remove old Mr. Elliot suddenly; upon which, what could my Nannie do, but try to make the major provide properly for his motherless babe? She got him to do it; that is, to send him to school

when he was old enough. And she, being too fond of this godless brother—dear soft soul that she was!—hushed up the matter; so that scarcely a creature knows here what became of Bell Foster, or whether she went away to her ruin or her uprise. My Nannie had promised the dying Magdalen that she would be a mother to her child; and I do believe that was the reason I found her a single woman at one and thirty, when she and I first met at Scarborough, above fifteen years ago. She would not consent to marry me, till I had given my consent to her going on with seeing young Stephen, and helping him now and then at a pinch.”

“ And this man’s father, my dear sir, how did he act?” asked Fitz Arthur, almost foreseeing the sort of answer.

“ Why, he had him home from school sometimes when he was himself at home, or had him to the places his regiment was quartered at; setting him no good example, you may be sure; and at last he got him a commission in some foot regi-

ment, without giving him money to spend in the way he was used to whenever he was in his company. At last, Major Elliot was killed in a duel, leaving no will, nor a penny to Stephen, now nearly eighteen years of age; and after that the young man fell upon us."

"My dear second mother!" exclaimed Fitz Arthur, his eyes filling with tender and grateful recollection: "I fear she would think it her duty to continue all his fatal indulgences!"

"Ah, that she did, kind soul!" resumed the artless Baronet. "We consulted together; and as the boy was an officer, and had got expensive habits, and had been left so cruelly in the lurch by him that had taught him them, we agreed to make over to him at once, four thousand pounds; he promising to live upon the interest of that and his pay together. We did; but, Lord bless us! then came debts of honour, and other debts, and promotion. In short, the four thousand was run through; and then it was always begging and writing, or coming to my

poor easy-hearted wife, looking like his father, and talking like his father (always respectful and grateful though); many a woman's ornament did the dear soul deny herself, unknown to me, to get him out of troubles: so when it pleased Heaven to take her, I was forced to go on something after the same fashion. Then every time he applied to me, he vowed it should be the last; so that I did not care to say any thing of the matter to any one, for fear of disgracing him, and ripping up the old grievance of his father's bad behaviour. Besides, he always takes me unawares. However, I begin to be quite wearied out now; that is, I think he is growing too much for me to manage by myself: yet I am so afraid of younger blood taking fire!"

"If you fear that I should get into a quarrel with this man, my dear father," said Fitz Arthur, "dismiss the idea. I feel now, what I must ever feel on the subject; something much stronger, yet quieter than anger—indignation at the base ingratitude and cowardice of the

profligate!" Fitz Arthur spoke with an energy and sternness unusual to him; hastening to quell the emotion which, in spite of his belief to the contrary, was fast kindling into wrath, as he thought of his credulous father's long harassment of spirit, in consequence of this reprobate's exactions; he added temperately, "Pray tell me, dear sir, what brought him here to-day."

"Why, to get more money, to be sure," replied Sir Everard, with a half-groan. "Twelve months ago he sold out of the army, and embarked in some business, and now he is a bankrupt; has had a roguish partner, or an unfortunate speculation—I don't clearly understand which—but he came to beg a sum to fit him out for the West Indies, where he says he has a lucrative situation offered him; and that if once he and his wife were settled there, they would be sure of a good provision."

Fitz Arthur shook his head expressively. Sir Everard went on:—"I do assure you, Delaval, I was high and hard

with him this time ; I told him roundly that I did not believe one word he said, and that I should give him the money, because I never meant to give him any more while I had breath : for I had outrun myself so scandalously by such fooleries, that my sons were like to be beggars for it all the days of their lives ; and that now you were come home, I was turning over a new leaf, and never meant to spend a penny after this without having your good-will with it."

Fitz Arthur continued in serious thought for some moments after Sir Everard ceased speaking, then said, somewhat hastily, " I should like to see and talk with this man—I must do so."

" You, Delaval !" exclaimed his father : " by my word, that was what made me so shy of telling you the matter. I knew you would run over all my folly in it, and be for taking it up hotly with this poor never-do-good. — You men of the sword are forced to do so, they say. But is not one dear boy in the churchyard enough for a father, Delaval ?"

“ My dear father !” was all that Fitz Arthur could say in reply. The mention of his brother, from lips that rarely trusted themselves with Hedworth’s name, went to his heart. He saw tears on Sir Everard’s cheek, and he turned away his head ; accompanying the respectful movement with a pressure of the hand, expressive of tenderest sympathy.

When the father and son had recovered themselves, the latter explained his purposes so fully and temperately to the former, and so thoroughly convinced him, that instead of wishing to shame and irritate the person in question, he was desirous only of ascertaining his future means of subsistence, and ridding themselves of continued imposition ; that Sir Everard, entering more into detail of Stephen’s proceedings, gave his son the satisfaction of being certain that he had clues to discover all his frauds, and grounds for threatening him with punishment, should he resist following any course his injured friends might counsel him to pursue. There was so much to

blame, or rather to deplore, in the conduct of Stephen's patrons, that candour acknowledged the youth's extravagances and vices might be fairly attributed to their weak indulgence ; and as such, ought not to be severely dealt with in the man, though they must be resolutely. And for those injudicious patrons too, Fitz Arthur found excuses, in the youth and inexperience and natural partiality of Elliot's sister ; in his father's recollection of an early love, and indulgent fondness for his last wife. Both had acted to the best of their judgment ; and if blame were to be awarded, it was not to be given to either of them.

Never does the awful denunciation, contained in the second commandment, appear so strictly fulfilled as in the case of illegitimate children ! They come into the world without other inheritance than that of shame and dependence ; they are claimed by none — owned by none ; they want the first incentive to every generous affection, namely, a respectable and fostering home ; they live with-

out example of good ; and those who gave them being, however their remorseful hearts may yearn after virtue, dare not enforce its practice by precept alone.

Illegitimate children, therefore, have neither family bond, family character, family comfort, to lay waste by their excesses ; and untaught to dread offending our Father in heaven, what feeling is to restrain them from selfish gratifications ? The very first institutions of society (those of the married state,) are armed against them ; outlawing them from name and property. How then are the godless amongst these unfortunate persons, to help hating such institutions ?

These, and other apologies of general application for the son of Major Elliot, and others due to the youth's particular circumstances, tempered, in the just mind of Captain Fitz Arthur, as it arose, that strong indignation which would otherwise have rendered it impossible for him to have met, with perfect self-command, the man who had taken such cowardly advantage of his father's best feelings.

He was softened also by the pleasure he felt on another score. Never had he beheld his father's amiable heart placed in a more favourable light. With the judgment displayed, he would have nothing to do: the actuating motives were purely benevolent. There was less weakness and more goodness in the whole affair than Fitz Arthur had given his father credit for, in his first view; and that the concealment which had afflicted him, arose, not from guilty consciousness in Sir Everard, but from the dread of personal danger to his son, was a joy for which there was no drawback.

In the fulness of all these sacred and sweet emotions, Fitz Arthur discussed now his own future purposes. Sir Everard's eyes ran over, when he found that his son would voluntarily renounce the profession in which he had acquired a high reputation, and was still partial to, for the sake of brightening his remaining years.

"Then I am propped up for life!" he exclaimed. "God knows, I often feel that

I am a child still, and not fit to be trusted to walk alone : any smooth-tongued swindler can come over me. I wish it had pleased the Lord to have given me a little more sense amongst the rest of the good things he gave, and I have made away with, for want of it !”

“ Dearest father !” said Fitz Arthur fondly pressing the hand he took, with even more than his usual reverence, “ you do not want *more* of any quality ; you only require a little *less* of heart. Yet I do not think there is son or servant of yours that would barter the last for the first. So let us be content with our allotments, and simply stand to our guard, for the time to come.”

“ I should have told you all about this business long ago,” resumed Sir Everard, “ but the fellow was cunning enough to keep me up to the secret plan, by hints of his own hot temper, and your probable reproaches for what he had got out of me. And indeed he promised so faithfully never to trouble me again, after these last hundreds, that I was fain to

believe you need never be vexed by knowing the fool I had been so long. To be sure he has got money enough out of me under divers pretences."

Fitz Arthur was aware that his father's great error had been neglecting to see that his bounty was actually applied to the purpose for which it was said to be required. Had Sir Everard exerted himself more actively, and rather sought a respectable mode of earning his own maintenance for Stephen, than supplied his immediate wants on every occasion, the man might at last have been established in something useful and gainful. As it was, it appeared too likely that, habituated to live upon begging, he was even now about to waste the money just obtained, instead of applying it to a permanent settlement for himself and his wife.

It was in this belief that Fitz Arthur felt called upon to take a personal share in so painful a business. He found the man had a wife; they might have children: if so, compassion called for his

interference, in addition to the duty he owed his own family; and to preserve their future security, was a sacred obligation.

Whilst considering the character and conduct of the person in question, he was too candid to fail of perceiving that the root of all the mischief lay in Major Elliot's heedless choice of a profession for his son. Having deprived him, by his very birth, of all the rights and privileges, and reflected respectability of a gentleman, he ought not to have put him into a situation, where devoid of these, the youth must try to make another sort of consequence for himself; namely, that of freer expenditure than better-born associates.

A parent in such circumstances, has no reasonable ground for expecting his son to be that prodigy of spontaneous excellence, which teaches how to seek distinction by nobler and worthier paths.

The just and generous nature which was now meditating over this mass of misery and criminality, felt the moderat-

ing influence of such reflections act upon his own feelings ; and he hoped that, by treating Stephen's past actions with merciful leniency, he might the easier induce him to wish and to will a different course hereafter.

Mr. Stephen's haunts were in London. Thither Fitz Arthur informed his father he should, with his leave, repair immediately. The business of quitting the army would be quicker got through there than in Northumberland ; and with part of the money he might receive for his commission, he inwardly determined, if need were, and the man's assurances justified it, to speed his settlement in some permanent way of providing for a family.

Neither love nor marriage were again mentioned by father or son. When the Captain's horse was announced (which he meant to ride to Hazeldean, that Abbot might have a conveyance back,) they parted. The heart of one sadly sure, that to think of either love or marriage in his case was desperate ; since every

guinea that came to him seemed so strangely to make wings for itself, the moment it reached his hand : the other's state of mind sweet and tranquil ; he saw sunshine on the surface of his beloved Delaval, and he guessed not that

“ The stream ran in coldness and darkness below.”

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